

# JOCK MACDONALD

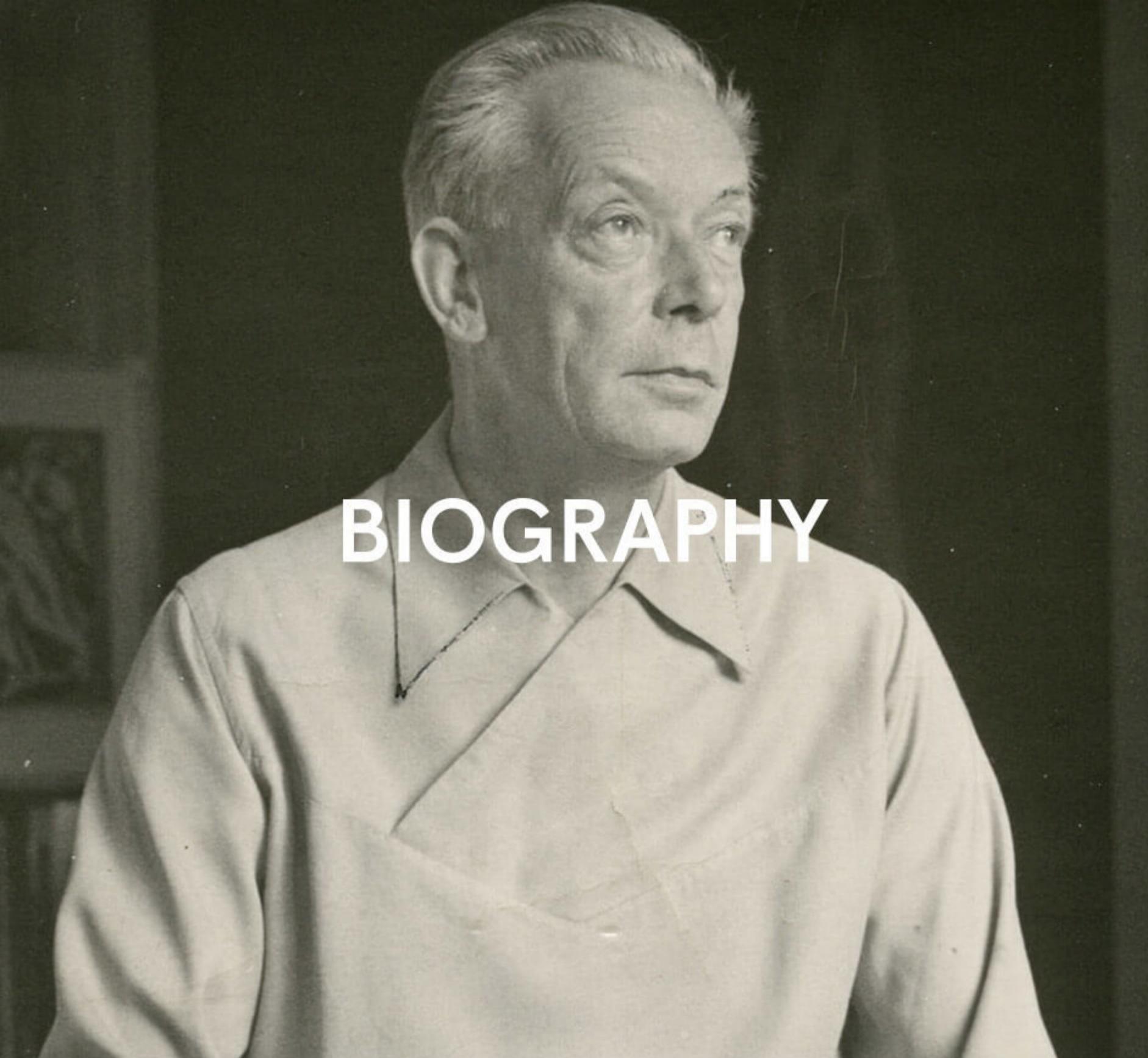
Life & Work

By Joyce Zemans

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# BIOGRAPHY

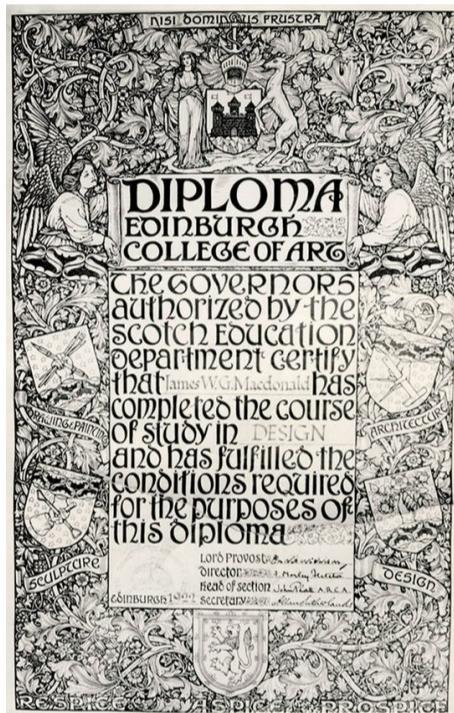
Jock Macdonald was a trailblazer in Canadian art from the 1930s to 1960. He was the first painter to exhibit abstract art in Vancouver, and throughout his life he championed Canadian avant-garde artists at home and abroad. His career path reflected the times: despite his commitment to his artistic practice, he earned his living as a teacher, becoming a mentor to several generations of artists. As a strong supporter of artists' organizations, he was a founding member of both the Canadian Group of Painters and Painters Eleven, and was instrumental in establishing the Calgary Group.



### EARLY YEARS

James Williamson Galloway Macdonald (1897-1960) was born in Thurso, Scotland—the most northerly town on the British mainland. Family members were noted for their achievements in architecture and the arts.<sup>1</sup> His twin sister, Isobel, an accomplished musician, remembered that the young Jock, as he was called, was always drawing.<sup>2</sup> After he graduated from high school, he decided to follow his father's career path as an architect and began apprenticing as a draftsman in Edinburgh. The First World War intervened and, like so many of his generation, Macdonald enlisted, serving as a Lewis gunner in the Fourteenth Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He was wounded in France and spent a year convalescing in hospital before he was posted to Ireland.<sup>3</sup>

In 1919 Macdonald entered the Edinburgh College of Art and decided to major in design. There he followed the traditional art-school curriculum of drawing from plaster casts, life drawing, painting, sculpture, design, and architecture. He particularly enjoyed field trips to London, where he drew objects in the Victoria and Albert Museum with the other students and visited art galleries on his own. Macdonald also registered in the national teacher-training program. In 1922, when he graduated with a diploma in design from the Edinburgh College of Art and an art specialist's teaching certificate from the Scottish Education Authority, he was awarded the design travelling scholarship as well as the prize in woodcarving.



LEFT: Macdonald's diploma from Edinburgh College of Art, 1922. RIGHT: Jock and Barbara Macdonald, date and photographer unknown.

That same year, Macdonald married Barbara Niece, a fellow student who had majored in painting. Although she never pursued a professional career, she became his best critic and strongest supporter.

### DESIGN AND TEACHING

While still a student, Macdonald did freelance design work for the Edinburgh office of Morton Sundour Fabrics. The company included Liberty of London and Holyrood Palace among its clients. On graduation, Macdonald was appointed staff designer at Morton Sundour's head office in Carlisle, England, where he created designs for every type of fabric—textiles, tapestries, and carpets. He remained at the firm for more than three years and became director of the handloom rug-weaving department. He remembered the job as incredibly demanding: "I found myself clocking in at 8 a.m. at the factory gates.... They wanted hundreds of [designs] ... new, effective, full of vitality, interesting and withal simple, not forgetting the cost of production."<sup>4</sup>

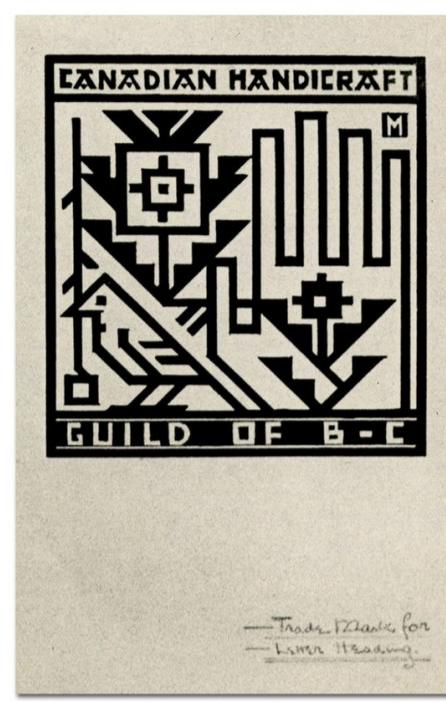
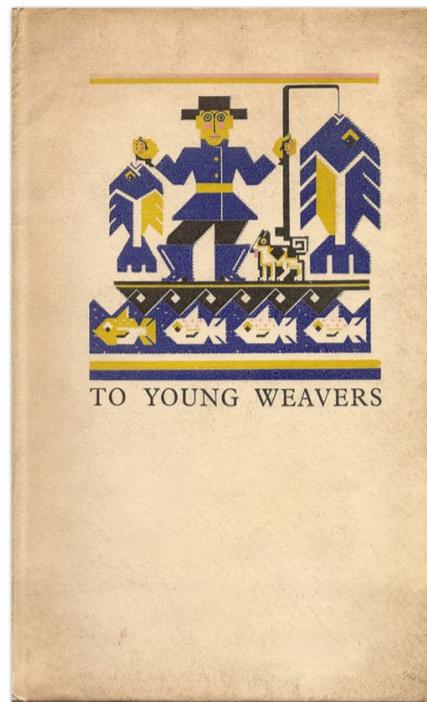


In 1925 Macdonald left Morton Sundour to become head of design at the Lincoln School of Art in England. A year later, excited by the idea of new opportunities, he successfully applied for the position of head of design at the recently established Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (now the Emily Carr University of Art + Design). He arrived in Vancouver in September 1926—and for the rest of his life he would teach as well as paint.

Although Macdonald was very busy with his teaching and administrative duties at the school, he also found time to do some design work. He created one of his first West Coast landscapes, the Art Deco *Burnaby Lake*, c. 1929, for a poster competition sponsored by the B.C. Electric Company.

### NEW AESTHETIC EXPRESSIONS: VANCOUVER

The late 1920s was an exciting time in Vancouver—a dramatic change from the staid Victorian art scene that had discouraged Emily Carr (1871–1945) in 1913 when she abandoned painting for over a decade. The creation of the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (VSDAA) was central to the shift, as was the arrival in the city of two men: Fred Varley (1881–1969), the renowned Group of Seven landscape and portrait painter who was the first head of drawing, painting, and composition at the school; and John Vanderpant (1884–1939), an internationally recognized photographer. Both were to have a profound influence on Jock Macdonald.



LEFT: *To Young Weavers; being some practical dreams on the future of textiles* (1927), a booklet by James Morton of Morton Sundour, Carlisle, illustrated by Charles Paine. Paine was Macdonald's mentor and there is a clear affinity between his style and Macdonald's early design work. RIGHT: Macdonald's trademark for the Canadian Handicraft Guild of British Columbia. Characteristic of Macdonald's work, this trademark design for the Canadian Handicraft Guild of British Columbia integrates symbolic images and geometric patterns.



Jock Macdonald, *The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park*, 1934, oil on board, 28.9 x 36.5 cm, British Columbia Archives Collection, Royal BC Museum Corporation, Victoria.



Varley fell in love with the British Columbia landscape and organized sketching trips for his colleagues and students. Macdonald began to focus on painting and shared a studio with Varley, who became his mentor. Recognizing that the grandeur of the landscape required a stronger medium than the watercolour and tempera of his earlier work, Macdonald began to paint in oil (*Lytton Church, B.C.*, 1930; *The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park, B.C.*, 1932; *Table Mountain, Garibaldi Park, B.C.*, 1934). The powerful connection he made with the rugged B.C. scenery, his spiritual identification with nature, and his determination to capture the experience of the landscape in paint set him on the quest that would shape his painting for the rest of his life.

In 1926 Vanderpaint and Harold Mortimer-Lamb (1872-1970) opened the Vanderpaint Galleries, which exhibited contemporary art and photography and promoted B.C. artists. The gallery soon became a force for modernist art in Vancouver and, between 1928 and 1939, a gathering place for the city's intellectual and artistic communities.<sup>5</sup>

Although Vancouver remained a conservative city culturally, an increasing number of residents were attracted to new ideas, and particularly to Eastern thought and spiritual concepts. In April 1929 a crowd filled the Vancouver Theatre to capacity, and thousands more stood in line to hear the poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, who "carried the audience into the realm of pure aesthetics."<sup>6</sup> For the artistic community, the Vancouver scene in the late 1920s and early 1930s might be summed up in Fred Varley's advice to his students to "forget anything not mystical."<sup>7</sup> In 1932 Macdonald painted *In the White Forest*—an image that represents a distinct shift in his work and the beginning of his lifelong search for the spiritual aspect of nature in art.

These heady days were not to last. With the onslaught of the Depression, the VSDAA cut faculty salaries drastically. When Macdonald and Varley realized that the burden was not shared fairly, they were outraged and in early 1933 resigned in protest.



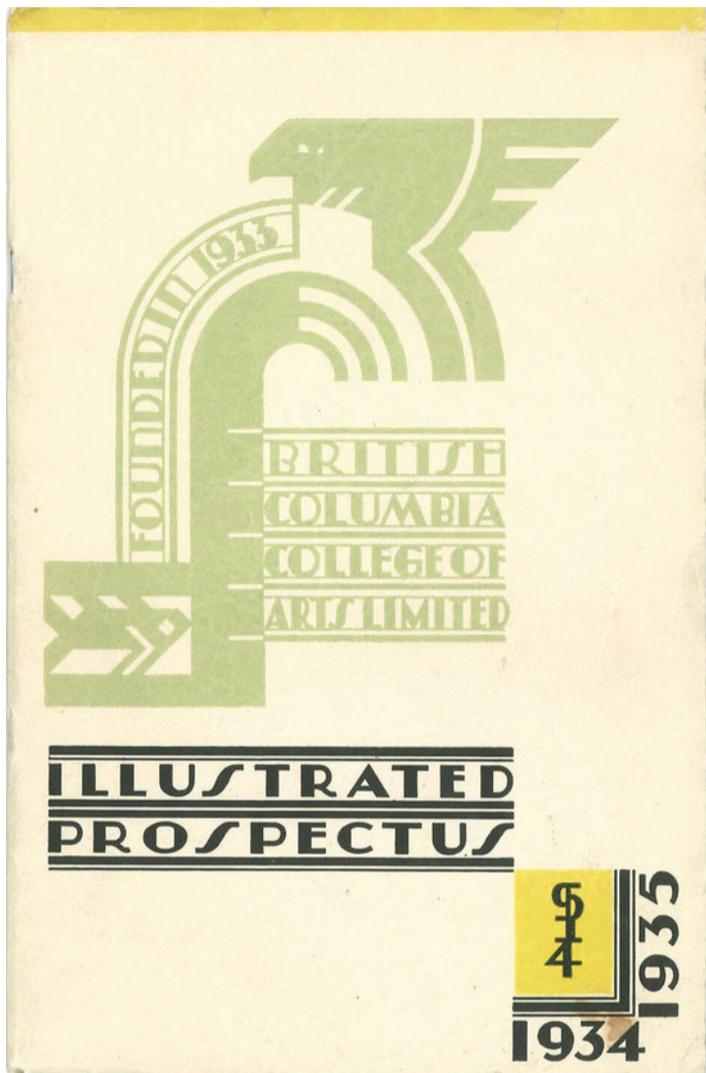
## THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COLLEGE OF ARTS

Almost immediately, Macdonald and Fred Varley(1881-1969) announced that they would open a new school, the British Columbia College of Arts, in September that same year. The college's educational philosophy, steeped in contemporary European modernist art and aesthetic theory and based on the anthroposophical beliefs of the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), was designed to bring all the arts together. Ambitious to "develop a new art movement," its multidisciplinary curriculum drew "from the east and the west the powerful forces of the art world, welding them together on the B.C. Coast."<sup>8</sup>

The college was housed in a former automobile showroom. Varley, the college's president, taught drawing, painting, portraiture, mural decoration, and book illustration; Macdonald, the first vice-president, oversaw industrial design, commercial advertising, colour theory, woodcarving, and children's art classes; and Harry Täuber, a European stage and costume designer who had recently arrived in Vancouver, was second vice-president and taught architecture, film, theatre arts, and art and metaphysics. Steeped in this experimental milieu, Macdonald painted *Formative Colour Activity*, 1934—his first semi-abstract painting, a visual analogue for the ideas that began to obsess him.



Vera Weatherbie, *Varley, Täuber, Macdonald*, c. 1934, oil on canvas, 118 x 137.5 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. One of the first graduates of the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, Vera Weatherbie taught drawing, composition, and painting at the British Columbia College of Arts, where metaphysics pervaded the discussions, inside and outside the classroom, and recommended readings included theosophical and anthroposophical texts. Like her colleagues, she was fascinated by Eastern mysticism and the concept of auras. Vera is the model for Varley's *Dharana*.



LEFT: Cover of the British Columbia College of Arts Limited's *Illustrated Prospectus* for 1934-35, design by Jock Macdonald, 1934. Designed and illustrated by Macdonald, the booklet outlined the innovative and ambitious objectives of the new school. RIGHT: Graduation ceremony at the British Columbia College of Arts, c. 1934-35, photograph by John Vanderpant. Jock Macdonald stands at the far left; F.H. Varley sits second from the right.

Though the college was a great academic success, tuition fees and limited private funding were not enough to support its operations. In 1935 the college closed, and Varley and Macdonald went their separate ways. The always-scrupulous Macdonald assumed responsibility for shutting it down in an orderly way and covering the outstanding debts from his own limited funds, so it would not leave a "bad odour."<sup>9</sup> Bitterly disappointed, and with no teaching prospects in sight, he sought a fresh start.

**NOOTKA: THE FIRST BREAKTHROUGH**

On June 19, 1935, Macdonald, his wife, Barbara, and their seven-year-old daughter, Fiona, along with Harry Täuber and his lover Leslie Planta, boarded the SS *Maquinna*. Their destination was Friendly Cove (Yuquot), a Nuu-chah-nulth (Mowachaht) village on Nootka Island off the west coast of Vancouver Island—the site of the first sustained contact between Europeans and the First Nations people of British Columbia.<sup>10</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Nootka Lighthouse, Nootka, B.C.*, 1936, watercolour on paper, 25 x 25.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Macdonald envisioned this sojourn as a time when he would work closely with nature in his art, in the hope of finding a "spiritual expression." But he also had another purpose in mind—the creation of an artists' colony.<sup>11</sup> Before leaving, he had asked the land surveyor's office which properties in the Nootka Sound

area were available for purchase<sup>12</sup> The group landed with living and building materials, art supplies, and extensive reading materials.

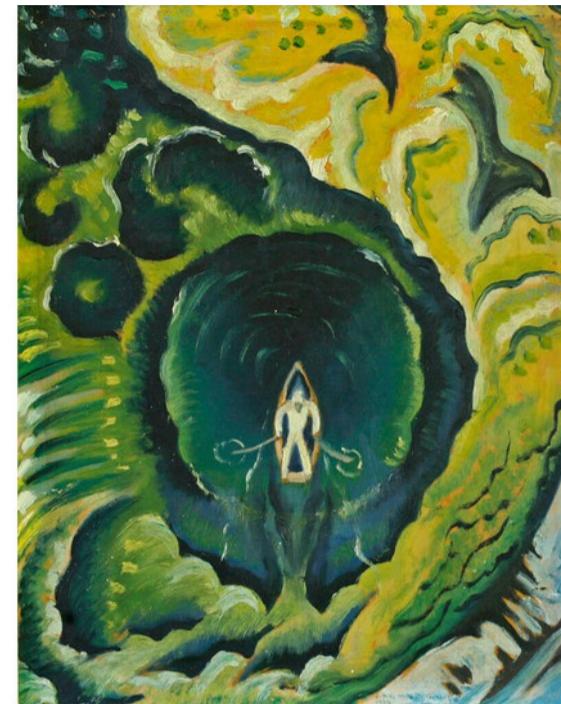
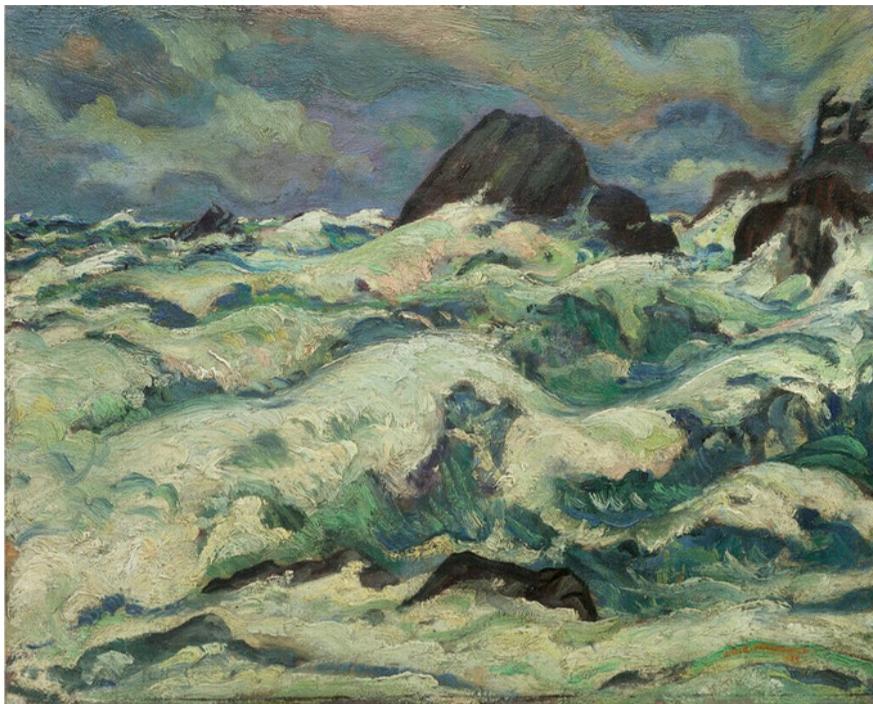
Macdonald spent the first few months engaged in hard physical labour, chopping wood, and fishing for food. Searching for a suitable piece of land, he travelled by boat through rough seas and made his way through dense growth on shore. Evenings offered a respite—a time for reading, study, listening to music, and communal discussions<sup>13</sup> But the opportunity for camaraderie proved short-lived. Täuber preferred to read than to do practical work, and in December he and Planta left the makeshift settlement.

Unable to locate a suitable piece of land, Macdonald settled with his family in an abandoned cabin. Desperately needing money, he wrote in his diary, "I painted and sketched as much as I could during this time, in the hope that I might sell a sketch + have some funds again."<sup>14</sup> In December he sent his dealer, Harry Hood at the Vancouver Art Emporium, nine oil-on-board sketches as well as *Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound, B.C., 1935*, the only work on canvas he completed during his sojourn in the Yuquot area, and *Formative Colour Activity*, 1934, which he asked to have forwarded to the first Canadian Group of Painters exhibition in Toronto. The sale of *Friendly Cove* for \$350 to the Clegg family solved his cash crunch over the winter, but the challenges of the harsh conditions continued.

Two paintings reflect Macdonald's complicated relationship with the ocean, on which he and his family depended for food and transport. *Graveyard of the Pacific*, 1935, captures the tremendous power and "fury" of the ocean—"The sea is ... 20 feet high + thundering up the beach," he wrote. "The horizon is a mass of foam + high rolling waves."<sup>15</sup> *Pacific Ocean Experience* (also titled *Myself in a Nine Foot Boat*), c. 1935, represents a very different perspective on the ocean. Safely contained within a protective mandorla, the artist seems at one with the swelling seas as two whales cavort around him. The smallness of the figure emphasizes its isolation, but the strange vantage point emphasizes that he is protected in the womb of nature.



Jock Macdonald, *Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound, B.C., 1935*, oil on canvas, 63.8 x 82.6 cm, current location unknown. This powerful image is the only known oil on canvas painted by Macdonald during his stay in Nootka.

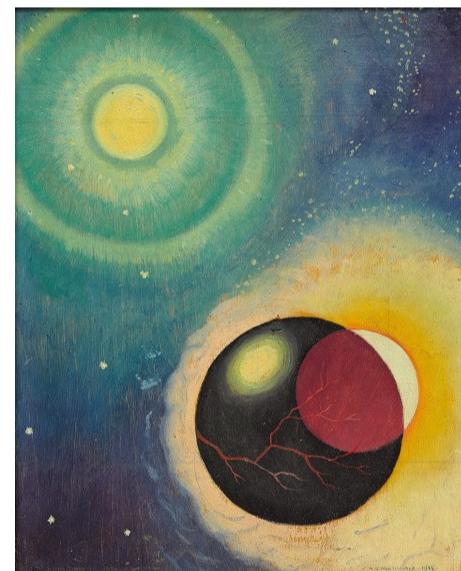


LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Graveyard of the Pacific*, 1935, oil on board, 31 x 38.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *Pacific Ocean Experience*, c. 1935, oil on panel, 34.9 x 27.6 cm, collection of Dr. Oona Eisenstadt.

In March 1936 the Macdonalds were joined by artist John Varley (1912–1969), the son of their former colleague, but he stayed only seven months. During that time, Macdonald injured his back, and he despaired of staying on with only his family over another winter. "We might as well starve beside friends," he wrote, in deciding to return to Vancouver<sup>16</sup>

The realization that they would soon be leaving seems to have stimulated Macdonald to focus on his original artistic objective for going to Nootka—the search for a new abstract artistic expression based on a spiritual relationship with nature. On October 5, 1936, he made the breakthrough that shaped his aesthetic quest over the next decade. In just three weeks he experienced a series of revelations, each of which led to a new work. He was, finally, creating something unique, "an expression all [his] own."<sup>17</sup> Many of the ideas came in the evening as he sketched, and he worked his drawings into paintings the next day. In the oil-on-board works *Departing Day*, 1936, and *Etheric Form*, 1936, he portrayed his concept of the solar system in richly vibrating imagery. Though Macdonald described this breakthrough as spontaneous, it was the result of years of reading, study, and contemplation.<sup>18</sup>

On October 24 Macdonald wrote in his diary that he had received an offer of a part-time job at the Canadian Institute of Associated Arts, a private vocational school. "Here is hope at long last," he wrote. "I feel that I have work to do in Vancouver + I intend on sailing right in."<sup>19</sup> On November 27, after nearly eighteen months, the Macdonalds left Nootka. The discoveries from this last intensive period of exploring an abstraction derived from nature—what Macdonald called his "thought forms in nature" or "modalities"—would become his major focus for the next decade.



Jock Macdonald, *Departing Day*, 1936 (dated 1935), oil on wood panel, 37.9 x 30.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



### VANCOUVER AGAIN, 1936–46

The challenges of teaching in a trying environment and continuing financial pressures took their toll, and in the spring of 1937 Macdonald was confined to bed—the result, he wrote, of “undernourishment together with over-exertion … during physical duties on the West Coast.” He continued: “Things are … so difficult … it appears likely that I will leave Canada for further south—for a time.”<sup>20</sup> That fall, after completing the requirements for a B.C. teaching certificate, he finally obtained a full-time teaching post with the Vancouver School Board, at Templeton Junior High. The following year he moved to the Vancouver Technical Secondary School, but he was continually exasperated by conservative school administrators and frustrated by the constraints on his teaching. He remained in this “purgatory” for seven years.<sup>21</sup>

Macdonald was, however, able to find meaning in his painting, and he began working on several major canvases, derived from sketches he had made on Nootka Island, including *Indian Burial, Nootka*, 1937. Its purchase by the Vancouver Art Gallery provided him much-needed financial relief.

By May 1938 he had almost completed the brilliant *Drying Herring Roe*, 1938—a work he described as “typically West Coast … pure in colour and direct in composition.”<sup>22</sup> This painting, along with the more abstract *Pilgrimage*, 1937, was selected by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa for the *Century of Canadian Art* exhibition that the gallery was organizing for the Tate Gallery in London. In 1939 Macdonald undertook a large mural (now destroyed), also drawn from the Nootka landscape, which was commissioned for the dining room of the new Hotel Vancouver. Macdonald later wrote of this work: “I am sure [it was] one of the first semi-abstract murals done in Canada, if not the first.”<sup>23</sup>



Jock Macdonald, mural, Hotel Vancouver’s main dining room, c. 1939, oil on canvas, 3.5 x 5 m, no longer extant, photograph by Canadian National Railways. Macdonald described the mural as one of the first semi-abstract murals done in Canada with its “extension of forms, one into another,” and “the overlapping of colour projections.”

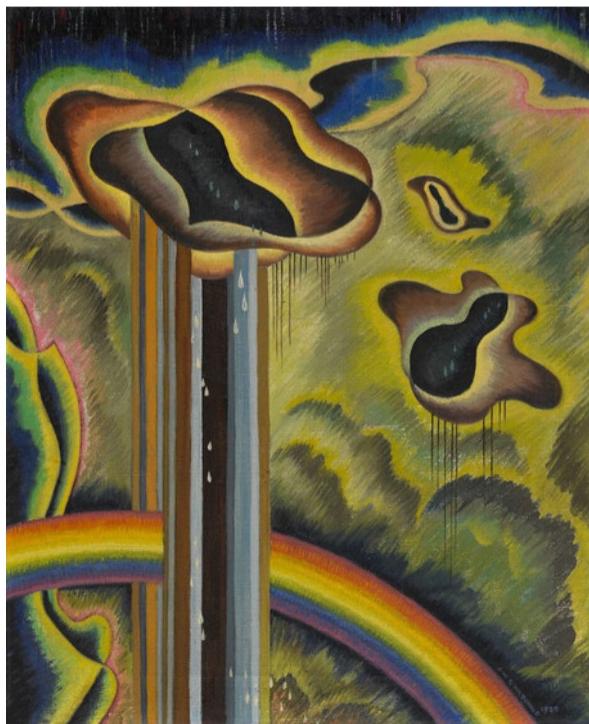


Jock Macdonald, *B.C. Indian Village*, 1943, gouache on paper, 76.3 x 101.5 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. Macdonald’s design for his contribution to the National Gallery of Canada’s wartime silkscreen print program.

In the summer of 1939 the Macdonald family set out in a borrowed car for California. Macdonald found the art exhibition at San Francisco's Golden Gate International Exposition "simply excellent, quite the finest collection of work I have ever seen—a fine collection of original Van Goghs, two Gauguin, several Braque (an amazing aesthetic artist—in design and colour), Matisse, Picasso, Léger, Marc, Kandinsky and every other notable."<sup>24</sup> In Los Angeles he saw *Guernica*, 1937, by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), where it was exhibited to raise funds for Spanish refugees. The Macdonalds arrived home at the end of August "full of cosmic vibrations."<sup>25</sup>

In 1943 Macdonald would return to the subject of the Nootka community and landscape once again with his composite image *B.C. Indian Village*, having been invited to participate in the National Gallery's wartime silkscreen project. The gallery's partnership with the printing and design firm Sampson-Matthews has been described as "an incalculable service to the armed service," one that would "greatly aid in spreading an understanding and appreciation of Canadian art."<sup>26</sup> The prints were distributed to military bases across Canada and abroad, and later to schools in every province.

On his return to Vancouver in late 1936, Macdonald had continued his explorations of the semi-abstracts he had begun during his last intensive weeks on Nootka. Considering them works in progress, he initially kept them a secret from almost everyone in Vancouver except his old friend John Vanderpant (1884–1939), who had experimented with abstraction drawn from nature in his photographs and had inspired Macdonald's own work. For Macdonald, these modalities, which were "by far the most advanced painting being produced in British Columbia" at the time,<sup>27</sup> were "much more exciting than the landscapes."<sup>28</sup>



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Rain*, 1938, oil on canvas, 56.2 x 46.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Nan Cheney, *Portrait of Jock Macdonald*, 1938, oil on canvas, 61.5 x 71.8 cm, British Columbia Archives Collection, Royal BC Museum Corporation, Victoria. Cheney's portrait, which includes the left portion of *Rain*, was shown at the Ontario Society of Artists' exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto, March 2–29, 1939. On July 20, 1938, Cheney wrote to Eric Brown: "Macdonald was in yesterday and suggested my lightening the background a little, which I did, & I think it is greatly improved."



In April 1938 Macdonald exhibited four of these semi-abstract paintings, including *Rain*, 1938, with the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts at the Vancouver Art Gallery. He reported to H.O. McCurry, director of the National Gallery, that they "stimulated a surprising number of visitors to the studio—demanding private views and numerous requests for purchases," and that he hoped to have a "complete one-man show in Eastern Canada or the U.S."<sup>29</sup> Describing the spiritual power of these works, he wrote: "My enthusiasm for expression in the semi-abstract—or my 'modalities' ... lift me out of the earthliness, the material mire of our civilization."<sup>30</sup>

Macdonald also shared his experiments in abstraction with Emily Carr (1871–1945), whose work he had long admired.<sup>31</sup> Describing her as "the first artist in the country and a genius without question," he strongly urged the National Gallery to acquire her paintings. "The deep inner significance of this artist is tremendous," he wrote.<sup>32</sup> He purchased her *Young Pines in Light*, c. 1935, for his own collection.

When Lawren Harris (1885–1970) moved to Vancouver in 1940, Macdonald once again had an artist-confidant with whom he could share his passion for the land and his commitment to abstraction. They enjoyed going on sketching expeditions together. Macdonald had read Harris's writings on the spiritual in art in *The Canadian Theosophist* and the 1928–29 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada and shared with him the belief that nature represented a spiritual source for artists. Indeed, Macdonald had admired Harris's work, particularly his powerful northern landscapes, since he was introduced to it in the late 1920s. In 1938 Macdonald had advised the National Gallery to include Harris's abstractions in the exhibition it was organizing for the Tate Gallery in London: "They ... hold a significant meaning in creative thought."<sup>33</sup>

In February 1940 Macdonald gave a seminal lecture at the Vancouver Art Gallery, entitled "Art in Relation to Nature," in which he explained his artistic philosophy.<sup>34</sup> Based on his knowledge of contemporary mathematical, scientific, and artistic theories, it outlined the philosophy that guided him as an artist and his commitment to making art that reflected the truth of the time in which he lived. The following year he was elected president of the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts and represented the province at the landmark Kingston Conference, the first national gathering of Canadian artists.<sup>35</sup>



Emily Carr, *Young Pines in Light*, c. 1935, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 49.5 cm, collection of the Toronto District School Board.



Lawren Harris, Jock Macdonald, and A.Y. Jackson at Nan Cheney's house, North Shore, Vancouver, 1944, photographer unknown.

### RENEWAL: THE AUTOMATICS

In the mid-1940s Macdonald met the British Surrealist artist and psychiatrist Dr. Grace Pailthorpe (1883-1971) and her colleague, artist-poet Reuben Mednikoff (1906-1972), who lived in Vancouver for four years while Pailthorpe was on staff at the provincial psychiatric hospital, Essondale. Their theory of automatic painting would radically change Macdonald's approach to painting and shape his art for the rest of his life. André Breton (1896-1966), the leader of the Surrealist movement, had hailed Pailthorpe's and Mednikoff's work in 1936 as "the best and most truly surrealist."<sup>36</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Fish Playground*, 1946, watercolour on paper, 32 x 39 cm, Alberta Foundation for the Arts. Like *Russian Fantasy*, this work was completed in 1946 and shows the influence of Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff's tutelage in the automatic process.

In April 1944 Pailthorpe gave a lecture on Surrealism at the Vancouver Art Gallery to an overflow audience and in June the gallery mounted a two-person exhibition of her and Mednikoff's work. In November Macdonald participated in her lecture-demonstration on automatic art for the Vancouver chapter of the Federation of Canadian Artists. Pailthorpe asked the audience to respond "very quickly, and without hesitation" to an automatic work and to write down what the picture conveyed.<sup>37</sup> She described automatic imagery as "hieroglyphic inscriptions of memories buried deep in the unconscious mind."<sup>38</sup>



LEFT: Reuben Mednikoff, *September 25, 1936, No. 1*, 1936, ink on paper, 38.5 x 24.6 cm, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. RIGHT: Grace Pailthorpe, *The Spotted Ousey*, 1942, oil on Masonite, 20.5 x 35.5 cm, The Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and Surrealist Art in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



In the fall of 1945 Macdonald spent three months in intensive study of the automatic process with Pailthorpe and Mednikoff. The sessions offered the next critical stepping stone in his search for a fully realized abstract expression. Over the following seven years, in works such as *Russian Fantasy*, 1946, he produced a series of automatic watercolour paintings that received much praise. His art became freer and more open, and he experienced a joy he had not known before in his painting. Lawren Harris (1885–1970) considered these paintings "simply magnificent."<sup>39</sup>

In 1946 the Vancouver Art Gallery held an exhibition of Macdonald's automatic watercolours. Grace Morley, the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), saw it and, declaring there was "nothing like this form of automatic statement anywhere in the world," arranged a solo exhibition of forty-eight of these works at her gallery in 1947. She told him, "Your glorious color makes me drunk, your design work is altogether satisfying and superb."<sup>40</sup> In November the same exhibition was mounted at the Hart House Gallery at the University of Toronto.

Pailthorpe became a lifelong mentor and confidant for Macdonald, even after she returned to England in 1946. He corresponded with her and Mednikoff regularly about the progress of his work and his career, and to them he was a star student. He wrote:

I feel that I so greatly need  
your friendship and advice  
that I would undoubtedly be  
isolated and alone without it.  
Never can you know how  
indebted I am to both of you  
for the awakening and  
releasing of my inner  
consciousness. Your coming  
to this distant outpost has  
been an initiation for me, into  
the higher plane of creative  
understanding—one of the  
most marvelous enrichments  
in my life.<sup>41</sup>



Jock Macdonald and Dr. Grace W. Pailthorpe, 22 Redington Road, London, August 1949.

Despite his stimulating friendships and the fulfillment of his artwork in Vancouver, Macdonald remained frustrated and despairing about his teaching situation. In 1946 he learned of an opportunity as head of the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary and decided to apply. When he heard he had been appointed, he exulted to Pailthorpe: "I am out of prison at last, after seven years."<sup>42</sup>

The art critic for *The Vancouver Daily Province* wrote that Macdonald's departure meant "a distinct loss for the Art world of British Columbia. [His] paintings ... have been much admired through Canada and overseas. [His] active co-operation with our leading Art organizations has not only furthered

Art in this province, but made for his many friends who will greatly regret his absence."<sup>43</sup>

### OUT ON A LIMB IN CALGARY

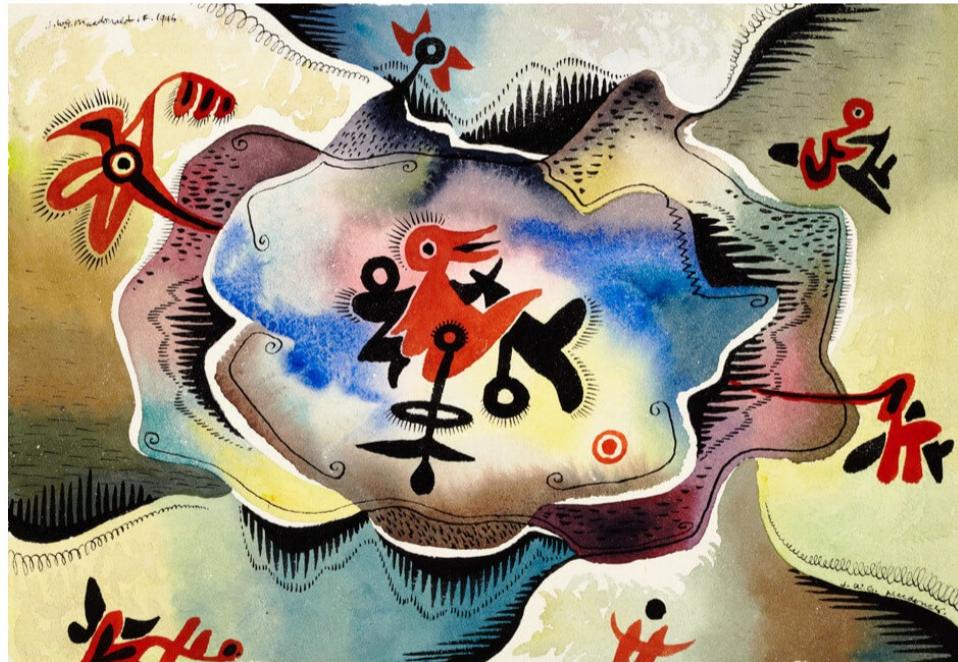
Macdonald soon discovered that the situation in Calgary had its own challenges. "Since coming to the art department ... I have been in one big fight," he wrote. "The understanding of art + appreciation of art is dreadfully low in the city. Never have the art conscious people been even slightly introduced to 20th century expressions.... There is work for us to do here and that is quite stimulating."<sup>44</sup>

Encouraged by the response he received after a lecture he gave at the Calgary Sketch Club, Macdonald enthused, "When eventually we get [proper accommodation], we can gather in our new friends, listen to good music, and paint again."<sup>45</sup> Among these friends was the architect-artist Maxwell Bates (1906-1980), with whom he enjoyed a rich, lifelong correspondence. Invited to speak to the Alberta Society of Artists, Macdonald predicted that his talk on present-day trends in art would eat "into the old fashioned doctrines worshipped here."<sup>46</sup> After a few months, he gave up on the existing artists' organizations and founded the progressive Calgary Group.<sup>47</sup>

At the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary, Macdonald revised the curriculum, introducing a "general course + an experimental course.... No longer were we to be an insane asylum." The result was a significant increase in enrolments, the large majority of them veterans wanting a quick course in commercial art. At the same time, he determined, "they will get the creative + experimental work I can push into them."<sup>48</sup>

Macdonald's first year of teaching bore immediate fruit: "Everyone admitted that [the graduating class exhibition] was the finest art school exhibition ever seen here." To promote his students' avant-garde work, he determined to mount the exhibition again in the fall at the Hudson's Bay Company or Eaton's department stores, where hundreds of people could "really see it." The school's retention rate, never more than 25 per cent, had climbed to 90 per cent.<sup>49</sup>

Macdonald had little time for his own painting during this busy year—and he struggled to overcome the tightness of the figurative line drawings in abstract automatics such as *Orange Bird*, 1946. These decorative elements, carried over from his work as a designer, contradicted the openness he sought in his painterly style.



Jock Macdonald, *Orange Bird*, 1946, watercolour on paper, laid down, 18.5 x 26.4 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.



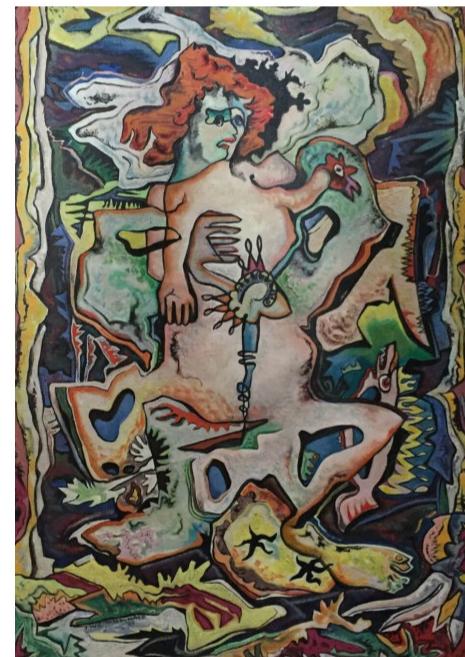
After just one year in Calgary, Macdonald received an offer to teach at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto. He found the combination of a significant increase in salary and a more congenial cultural environment irresistible.

### A NEW START IN TORONTO

Macdonald arrived in Toronto in the fall of 1947—just as the exhibition of his automatic paintings opened at the Hart House Gallery at the University of Toronto. “It will be easier to explain my attitudes towards art in this show than for me to say it in words,” he wrote.<sup>50</sup> Committed to the automatic process, Macdonald began to tackle larger and more complex works, moving from the intimacy of the earlier automatics to a more monumental scale.<sup>51</sup> He was thrilled when his first automatic oil, *Ocean Legend*, 1947, was accepted at the annual exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters: it was, he wrote, “entirely out of the usual line of exhibition pictures” in English Canada.<sup>52</sup>

Though Macdonald quickly established himself in Toronto’s artistic forefront, he found little interest in the city in European or American modernism. The Group of Seven still dominated the art scene.<sup>53</sup> It was the same at the art college, where Macdonald described the philosophy as “academic sleepwalking.”<sup>54</sup> Still, he found pleasure in the opportunity to make even small inroads in the curriculum and rejoiced when his students expressed an interest in contemporary artistic expression. As in Vancouver and Calgary, he became a mentor to many of the most promising of his students: he not only introduced them to the contemporary art scene and current exhibitions but encouraged and supported them in their work.

In the summer of 1948 Macdonald joined Alexandra Luke (1901–1967) and other Canadian artists in Provincetown, Massachusetts, to work for several weeks at the studio of Hans Hofmann (1880–1966). A remarkable teacher and theorist whom Macdonald greatly admired, Hofmann immediately understood that Macdonald felt constrained by the oil medium in his automatic paintings: “All these lines that you have are crutches ...,” he advised. “Colour must be the guide to composition, otherwise drawing destroys your impulse to paint.”<sup>55</sup> Macdonald returned to Provincetown the following year. He wrote to Grace Pailthorpe (1883–1971) that he found Hofmann “magnificently spiritual in his personality and his attitude to art.”<sup>56</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Ocean Legend*, 1947, oil on canvas, 86.4 x 61 cm, private collection.

Summers offered time for additional teaching and income—particularly at the Banff School of Fine Arts (now the Banff Centre) and later at the Doon School of Fine Arts, near Kitchener, Ontario—as well as time for travel and renewal. In 1949 Macdonald was excited by an invitation to teach in Breda, the Netherlands, for UNESCO. The work he saw in the Nusantara Museum (the Indonesian ethnographic museum in Delft) inspired him to experiment with new subjects, media, and techniques. Paintings such as *Eastern Pomp (Eastern Dancers)*, c. 1951, reflect the striking imagery and richly coloured batiks of Indonesian textiles.<sup>57</sup> In the summer of 1951 at Banff he and Marion Nicoll (1909–1985) experimented by applying automatic techniques to the batik medium. Macdonald also used the wax-resist technique of batik in his paintings, and its free linear aspect and unanticipated results seemed to revitalize Macdonald's interest in automatism.

In the summer of 1952 Macdonald was artist-in-residence at the Arts Centre of Greater Victoria (now the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria), and in August the gallery mounted a solo exhibition of his watercolours. In the explosively rich *Scent of a Summer Garden*, 1952, the artist abandoned all referential imagery and turned to dripping and staining colour to achieve a brilliant new sensibility. This painting, along with works such as the mystically symbolic *Fabric of Dreams*, 1952, earned well-deserved praise for Macdonald as the best watercolour painter in Canada.<sup>58</sup>



Hans Hofmann and Jock Macdonald, Provincetown, c. 1949, photograph by Barbara Macdonald.



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Batik*, 1951, aniline dye on cotton, 95.5 x 96.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Marion Nicoll, *Batik*, c. 1950, aniline dye on silk, 100 x 92.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Macdonald kept both of these experimental batiks in his collection.

### PAINTERS ELEVEN

The year 1952 saw the beginning of important changes in the Toronto art scene. In the fall, artist Alexandra Luke (1901–1967), who had studied automatic painting with Macdonald in Banff and become a close friend, organized the Canadian Abstract Exhibition at the Oshawa YWCA—and included Macdonald's work in it. A touring exhibition, the show was mounted at Hart House in Toronto in 1953.<sup>59</sup>

That same year, William Ronald (1926–1998) arranged the exhibition *Abstracts at Home*, which included the work of seven Toronto artists in the furniture galleries of the Simpson's department store. Though Macdonald did not participate in the show, he joined in discussions about formally creating a group of artists dedicated to exhibiting and promoting abstract art. They called themselves Painters Eleven, and the group mounted its first exhibition at the Roberts Gallery in Toronto in February 1954.<sup>60</sup> The crowds of visitors who attended the inaugural exhibition were excited by what they saw. In Macdonald's words: "There is none so alive, creatively forceful or as talented as the members of Painters XI."<sup>61</sup>

When Macdonald was offered a Royal Society of Canada fellowship for the academic year 1954–55 to work and study in France, he jumped at the opportunity. For the first and only time in his life, he was able to travel and paint without pressure to earn a livelihood. His ultimate destination was the south of France. He found working conditions ideal in Vence—living "up against the mountains," in the village "where Braque, Picasso & Léger spent considerable time."<sup>62</sup> The landscape paintings from this period include a number of works in which the oil paint is applied thickly with a palette knife. But it is in the watercolours, such as the exquisite *From a Riviera Window*, 1955, that Macdonald most successfully captures the light and sensibility of the south.

For Macdonald, one of the most important aspects of his sojourn there was his meeting with Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985), whose work he greatly admired. As he reported to a friend, Dubuffet told him, "You have not so far been able to express yourself as freely in oils as in watercolour. If only you could speak in oil as you do in watercolour ... you would have a profound contribution and a personal one ... you paint with too solid a medium."<sup>63</sup> Macdonald determined to try: "My aim is to find this technique and I will," he wrote.<sup>64</sup>



Painters Eleven in 1957, photograph by Peter Croydon. From left: Tom Hodgson, Alexandra Luke, Harold Town, Kazuo Nakamura, Jock Macdonald, Walter Yarwood, Hortense Gordon, Jack Bush, and Ray Mead. Missing from the photo are Oscar Cahén, who died in 1956 but is represented by the two front-facing paintings, and William Ronald, whose absence is marked by the three paintings that face the wall.



Jock Macdonald, *From a Riviera Window*, 1955, watercolour on paper, 42.8 x 32.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

### "HITTING ABSOLUTE TOPS"

When Macdonald returned to Toronto in 1955, he found that many artists were using commercial enamel paints that were cheaper, dried more quickly than oils, and were easier to work with for painters seeking fluidity in their work. In the spring of 1956, he began to experiment with Duco and, later, with Lucite 44. "After a session of trial and error I began to get control and more feeling for painterly qualities," he wrote. "I find my work far freer—much less tight, more painterly and frankly, I think more advanced."<sup>65</sup> Finally he had the tools required to achieve his objectives. For the rest of his life, Macdonald would go from strength to strength in his paintings.

In 1957 Macdonald, on behalf of most members of Painters Eleven, asked Clement Greenberg (1909–1994), champion of the American Abstract Expressionists, to Toronto to critique their work.<sup>66</sup>

Greenberg spent an afternoon in Macdonald's studio and his comments provided a great boost to the painter's confidence.

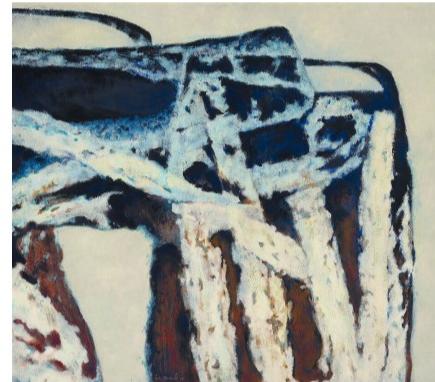
Macdonald reported that Greenberg thought his "new work was a tremendous step forward in the right direction, completely my own and could stand up to anything in New York." He said Macdonald was ready to free himself from the limitations imposed by the canvas—what he called "the box."<sup>67</sup> A year later Greenberg visited Toronto again and, in Macdonald's words, "he liked nearly all my things and found my very latest 'hitting absolute tops.'"<sup>68</sup>

In 1957 *Canadian Art* published an article on Macdonald by Maxwell Bates (1906–1980), the first in-depth article written about his work.<sup>69</sup> In November that same year, Hart House Gallery at the University of Toronto again mounted a solo exhibition of his paintings. It featured twenty-nine brilliant new works, including *Airy Journey*, 1957, and *Iridescent Monarch*, 1957, most of them in oil and Lucite 44. They are among the most satisfying and powerful abstract paintings ever created in Canada. Journalist and art critic Robert Fulford called Macdonald "without question the best young artist in Canada, even though he was born in 1897."<sup>70</sup>

Macdonald was heartened when he was invited to join the Park Gallery in Toronto. It offered him the promise of a New York show, international promotion of his work, and "a wider horizon for exhibitions."<sup>71</sup> His first solo show there in April 1958 contained an amazing sixteen new paintings, including *Rust of Antiquity*, 1958, which he had created since the Hart House exhibition five months before. He wrote that he had completed



Jock Macdonald, *Iridescent Monarch*, 1957, oil, acrylic, resin, and Lucite 44 on Masonite, 106.7 x 121.9 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.



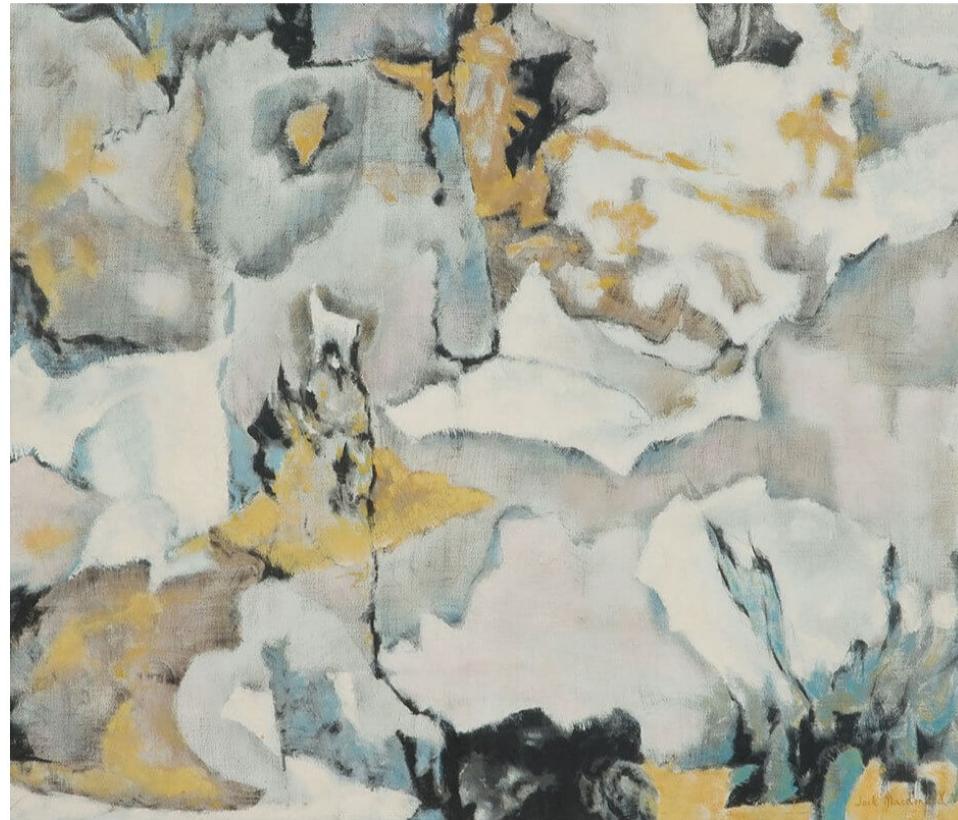
Jock Macdonald, *Rust of Antiquity*, 1958, oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite, 106.5 x 121.4 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.



Portrait of Jock Macdonald, date and photographer unknown.

almost one painting a week for the previous year.<sup>72</sup> In 1959 he left the gallery for Toronto's new Here and Now Gallery when it offered him a solo show for January 1960 and better representation nationally and internationally.

Driven by the need to devote more time to his painting, Macdonald reduced his teaching load at the Ontario College of Art to four days a week. He also committed to fewer private evening and weekend classes, though he continued to teach during the summer.<sup>73</sup> He was anxious, however, about the future on the meagre pension he would receive after mandatory retirement at sixty-five: "All I will get to live on after 36 years of striving to develop the art culture in Canada will be \$50 a month," he wrote. "One would think that something could have been done to give me enough to exist on and give me the chance to paint steadily until death."<sup>74</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Growing Serenity*, 1960, oil and Lucite 44 on canvas, 91.5 x 106.8 cm, Art Gallery of York University, Toronto.

In the spring of 1960 the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) mounted a retrospective exhibition of Macdonald's work. He was thrilled to accept "this very unique honor"—the first such show given to any living artist who was not a member of the Group of Seven since his arrival in Toronto thirteen years earlier.<sup>75</sup> In assembling work for the exhibition, Macdonald took pains to make sure that the evolution of his work was evident and that the modalities were prominently featured. Although most of the reviews were positive, Macdonald was upset by the lack of understanding by some critics of the early work, "the difficulty of the artist's search [and] the significance of the stepping stones when they appeared."<sup>76</sup>

In November 1960 Macdonald suffered a heart attack. He wrote to his former student Thelma Van Alstyne (1913–2008) from his hospital bed: "A beautiful morning of life giving Sunshine.... The happiness, the only happiness there is, is in the constant seeking for understanding of spiritual consciousness."<sup>77</sup> It is that understanding and oneness with nature and the natural universe, as in *Far Off Drums*, 1960, that informed Macdonald's search. He resumed teaching but died from a second heart attack on December 3.

Macdonald taught that "non-objective masterpieces are created intuitively—are alive with spiritual rhythm and organic with the cosmic order which rules the universe."<sup>78</sup> In his final works he achieved what he had set out to do in his modalities a quarter of a century before—to transcend the material world and find an expression of the spiritual beyond.



# KEY WORKS

Jock Macdonald's career as an artist took him from design and illustration to landscape painting and, from the early 1930s onward, to a lifelong search for expression through abstraction. His quest was guided by the most current discussions of art and aesthetics and of mathematical and scientific theories. As a teacher, Macdonald integrated these ideas into his classroom; in the studio, they informed his artistic practice. At the base of that search was his belief that design and art—even abstract art—must be rooted in the natural world.



## LYTTON CHURCH 1930



Jock Macdonald, *Lytton Church, B.C.*, 1930

Oil on canvas, 61.2 x 71.5 cm

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

This simple but powerful painting of the village of Lytton, situated at the confluence of the Thompson and Fraser rivers, reflects Macdonald's growing confidence in the oil medium. Through the use of lyrical lines that extend deep into space, the artist draws viewers beyond the wooden church in the foreground, through the valley, and into the mountain ranges beyond.

The colour is dry and the composition tightly structured compared with the magnificent landscapes by Macdonald's mentor, Fred Varley (1881-1969). Macdonald's wife, Barbara, remembered *Lytton Church, B.C.* as the first canvas for which Macdonald did not seek Varley's approval before submitting it for exhibition. As he wrote later: "I am grateful for [Varley's] encouragement ... but I preferred to stand on my own legs and by so doing, sink or swim."<sup>1</sup>



The subject is a reflection of Macdonald's growing belief that artistic creation should embody the ethos of the country. With it, Macdonald joined those artists in addition to Varley whose work he had come to admire, particularly Emily Carr (1871-1945) and W.P. Weston (1879-1967), who turned away from the picturesque in their search for a bold new vision of the West Coast landscape.

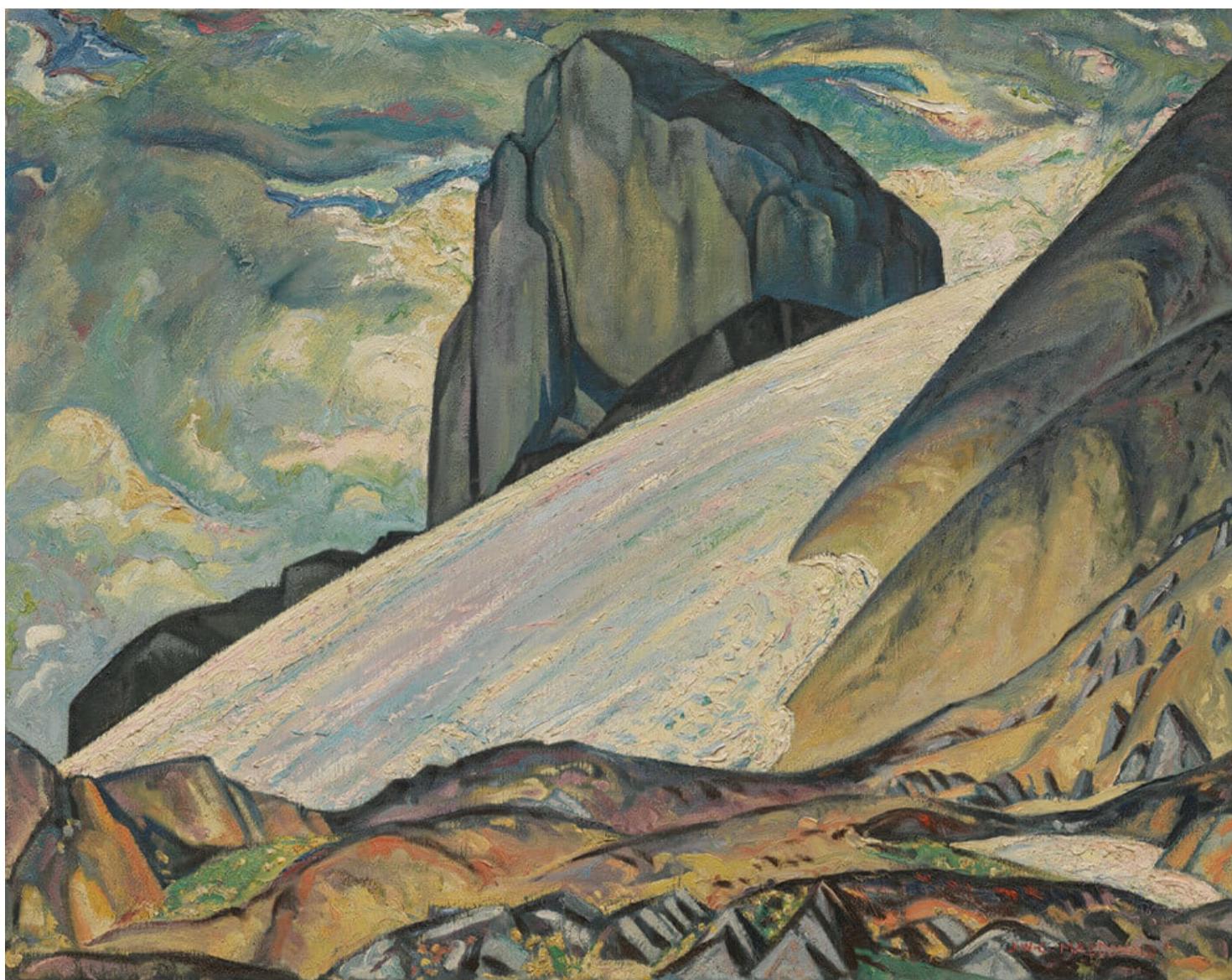
Macdonald was elated when this painting was accepted in 1931 for the exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in Toronto. The following year it was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada—the first of his paintings to enter a public collection. It is not surprising that when A.Y. Jackson (1882-1974) saw it, he wrote to Macdonald expressing his interest in the work: in composition it echoes many of Jackson's Quebec scenes with their carefully defined deep space and representation of Canadian subjects.



A.Y. Jackson, *The Road to St. Fidele*,  
1929-30, oil on canvas, 62 cm x 80 cm,  
Vancouver Art Gallery.



## THE BLACK TUSK 1932



Jock Macdonald, *The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park, B.C.*, 1932

Oil on canvas, 71 x 90.8 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery

This dramatic painting confirmed Macdonald's reputation as a painter of the Canadian landscape. Macdonald often joined Fred Varley (1881-1969) on painting expeditions into Garibaldi Park, where they attempted to capture the magnificence of the landscape. Macdonald described "that unbelievably beautiful virgin country still unknown to tourists, where ... the lakes are pure emerald, the glaciers are fractured with rose-madder, turquoise-blue and indigo crevasses, and the mountains are black, ochre and Egyptian Red."<sup>1</sup>



The dark tusk, silhouetted against an arresting cloudscape, is contrasted with the sweeping snowy slope and the diagonal blue-grey glacier. Macdonald's largest canvas to that time, the painting portrays a majestic landscape.

Although the repetition of the small Art Deco-inspired triangular elements in the immediate foreground—a carry-over from his design background—seem somewhat inappropriate in a work that aspires to monumentality, the painting is ultimately successful in symbolizing the rugged grandeur of British Columbia.

Immediately well received, *The Black Tusk* confirmed Macdonald's reputation as a painter of the Canadian scene. Over the next decade, it was widely exhibited in cities across Canada and abroad. In 1936 it was included in the *Exhibition of Contemporary Canadian Painting* organized by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, which circulated through the southern dominions of the British Empire, and three years later it was selected as part of the Canadian exhibition at the New York World's Fair. In 1941 Macdonald included it in his first solo exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery.



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, probably at Garibaldi, B.C., c. 1932, photograph by Ron Vickers.  
RIGHT: Fred Varley, John Varley, and Jock Macdonald camping by Pacific Gas and Electric Company railroad tracks near Cheakamus Canyon, B.C., 1929, photograph by Ross Lort.



## IN THE WHITE FOREST 1932



Jock Macdonald, *In the White Forest*, 1932

Oil on canvas, 66 x 76.2 cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

This landscape is one of Macdonald's first attempts to express the spiritual aspect of nature in his paintings. Here, bathed in a warm light, the hillocks formed by the snow-laden branches have a biomorphic, vitalist quality. A subtle diagonal establishes a rhythmic pulsing into the womb-like centre of the composition. In colour, handling, and mood, the painting is unique among his early works.

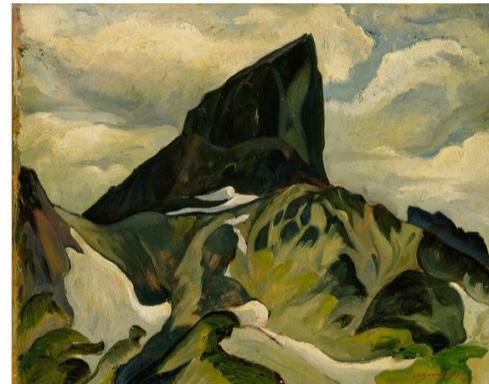
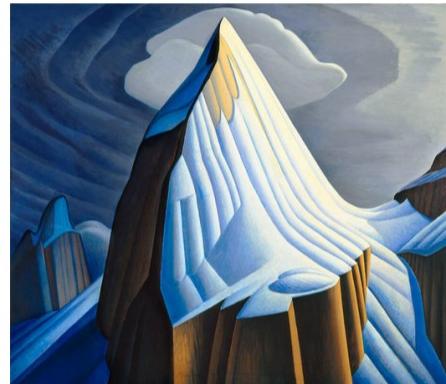


Macdonald wrote to Harry McCurry, the director of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, that the painting represents "snow hooded young trees, sheltering among those grand firs found in the forest on Grouse Mountain.... The subject in its expression conveys ... the inner (mental) interpretation of snow in the forest much more so than the other visible impression."<sup>1</sup> In the same letter, he asked McCurry to send him reproductions of Lawren Harris's theosophically inspired northern images, including one of Lake Superior, as well as *Mountain Forms*, 1926, and *Icebergs, Davis Strait*, 1930, or another Arctic subject by Harris (1885–1970).

Like other artists at the time, Macdonald sought to embody the spiritual in his work.<sup>2</sup> In Vancouver, the spiritual in art was a regular topic of discussion at the Vanderpant musicales, and Macdonald introduced it in his classes as well.

In 1934 Macdonald painted a second version of *The Black Tusk*. If the 1932 image represents earthly power, this later painting appears to portray spiritual yearning. Static monumentality has yielded to a spire, the middle ground has disappeared, and the Black Tusk looms above the foreground, its peak the apex of an acute-angled triangle. Macdonald had read Harris's writing of the period, including his article

"Revelation of Art in Canada" in *The Canadian Theosophist*, in which Harris stated his belief that art was "the epitome of the cosmic order" and that the artist must "infiltrate spirit and cosmic harmony into the chaos of appearance in order to reveal the plastic unity of existence."<sup>3</sup> From this period on, the spiritual would be central to Macdonald's quest.



LEFT: Lawren Harris, *Mt. Lefroy*, 1930, oil on canvas, 133.5 x 153.5 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park*, 1934, oil on board, 28.9 x 36.5 cm, British Columbia Archives Collection, Royal BC Museum Corporation, Victoria.

**FORMATIVE COLOUR ACTIVITY 1934**

Jock Macdonald, *Formative Colour Activity*, 1934  
Oil on canvas, 77 x 66.4 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa



This experimental work—Macdonald's first semi-abstract painting—marks the beginning of his search to express the underlying principles of nature in art through the study of science, mathematics, and philosophy. At the time, Macdonald was steeped in the multidisciplinary curriculum of the British Columbia College of Arts. Working from a still-life arrangement of flowers, he created an exercise in which he would "look at a patch of them and deal with them quite abstractly."<sup>1</sup> By magnifying a flower and painting only parts of it, he broke free from representation.

In the panel oil sketch that preceded this canvas, undulating areas of colour flow upward from the centre of the flower. Beatrice Lennie (1905–1987), a former student who had become one of Macdonald's colleagues, recalled his excitement after he completed the painting.<sup>2</sup> In this work, Macdonald was most certainly influenced by his friend John Vanderpant (1884–1939) who, in *Heart of a Cabbage*, c. 1929–30, and similar photographs, closed in on his subject, using light, shadow, and pattern to reveal its inner rhythm seemingly independent of objective form.<sup>3</sup> In his classes he quoted from Amédée Ozenfant (1886–1966): "A flower is no longer one of nature's smiles ... but magnetic waves directed along certain axes, so rapid that they become matter, colour."<sup>4</sup>



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Flower Study*, 1934, oil on fibreboard, 45.7 x 38.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: John Vanderpant, *Heart of the Cabbage*, 1929–30, 19.7 x 25 cm, silver gelatin print on wove paper, Vancouver Art Gallery.

In *Formative Colour Activity* the flower image stands on a sturdy stalk at the left of the canvas. The rest of the painting, however, is composed of fields of colour, radiating outward and filling the canvas with waves of flowing and dynamic movement. While the image is still very structured in its design, Macdonald was thrilled with the breakthrough it represented.

Caught up in the closure of the British Columbia College of Arts and the responsibilities of earning a livelihood during the Depression, however, Macdonald did not return to experiments with pure form and colour for another two years. Later, however, he dated his exploration of abstraction to this painting. So confident was he in the importance of this new direction that, while he was living in Nootka Sound in 1936, he submitted this work to the first Canadian Group of Painters exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario).<sup>5</sup>



DEPARTING DAY 1936 (DATED 1935)



Jock Macdonald, *Departing Day*, 1936 (dated 1935)

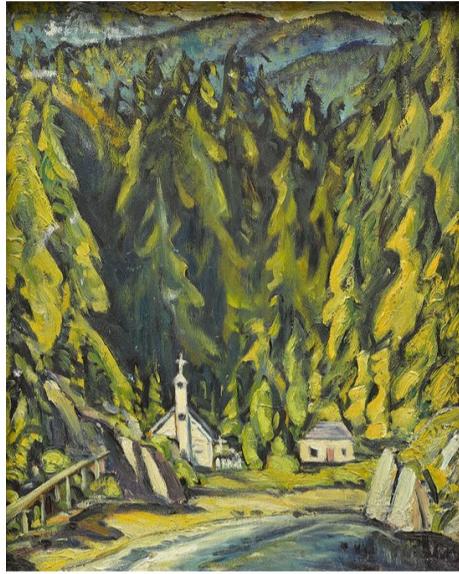
Oil on panel, 71.5 x 56.1 cm

Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto



This painting of an abstracted evening sky is one of Macdonald's first "modalities," or "thought forms in nature." Although he retrospectively dated it 1935, it was most certainly painted in October 1936 at the end of his nearly eighteen months in Nootka Sound.<sup>1</sup>

In his notes, Macdonald recorded discoveries about the solar system, outlining the physical properties of the planets, their distance from one another, and "tracing space to the utmost limit of human conception."<sup>2</sup> Reaching beyond representation in this work, he sought to portray the concept of the cosmic. The image, influenced by contemporary scientific photography, is flat and geometric.<sup>3</sup> Volume is obliterated. The composition relies on simply evoked forms of nature and the tension created by the juxtaposition of the elements.



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Indian Church, Friendly Cove*(recto of *Departing Day*), 1935, oil on wood panel, 37.9 x 30.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Church and grounds at Friendly Cove (Yuquot), date and photographer unknown.

When Macdonald left Vancouver for Nootka Sound in 1935, he wrote of his desire to find success with paintings developed from a "spiritual expression" of nature. Once there, however, the little time he had for art was devoted largely to the creation of images of local subjects that would appeal to buyers in Vancouver. It was only in the last three weeks before he left Nootka that he was able to focus on his original purpose.

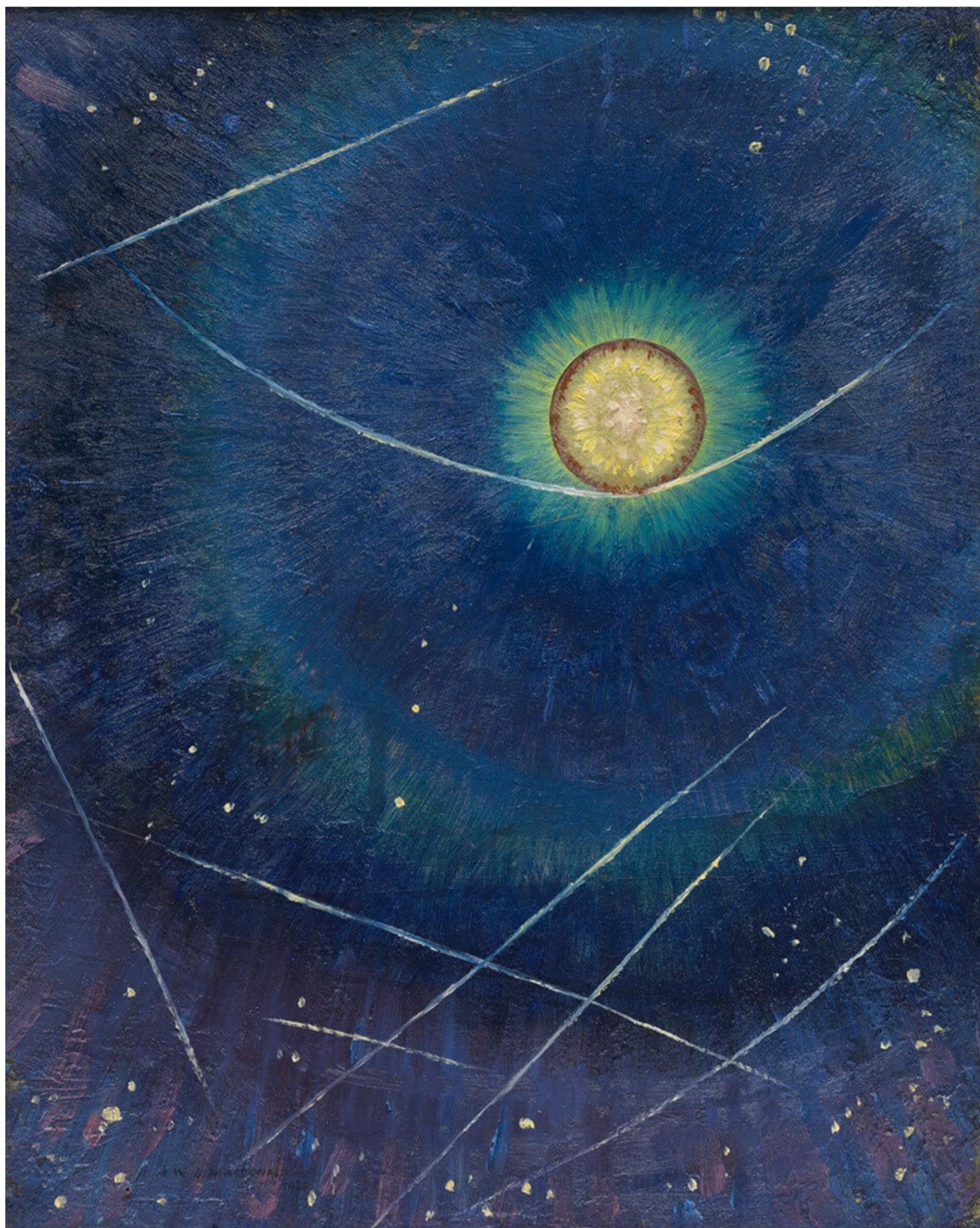
On October 5, 1936, Macdonald noted excitedly in his diary that he had discovered "a new expression for painting." The next day he wrote that his wife, Barbara, and artist John Varley (1912-1969), who was with them at Nootka, thought that Macdonald had found "an expression all [his] own.... Only ... abstract forms are used but they are intermixed in a bold mass. Purest colours are used + give a brilliant value."<sup>4</sup> Describing the preliminary drawing for this work, he wrote: it "show[s] moonlight, stars, milky way + the sun almost hidden behind the world."<sup>5</sup>

The discoveries of this intensive period of exploration became Macdonald's preoccupation for the next decade. As he wrote: "My time in Nootka has provided me with a new expression (which is only yet being born) which belongs to no school or already seen expression. To fail to follow through the force which is driving me ... would be destruction to my soul."<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to compare this oil sketch with Macdonald's larger version of the same subject, *Departing Day*, 1939. Despite its small size, this early work evokes both mystery and a sense of grandeur.



ETHERIC FORM 1936 (DATED 1934)



Jock Macdonald, *Etheric Form*, 1936 (dated 1934)

Oil on panel, 38.1 x 30.5 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery



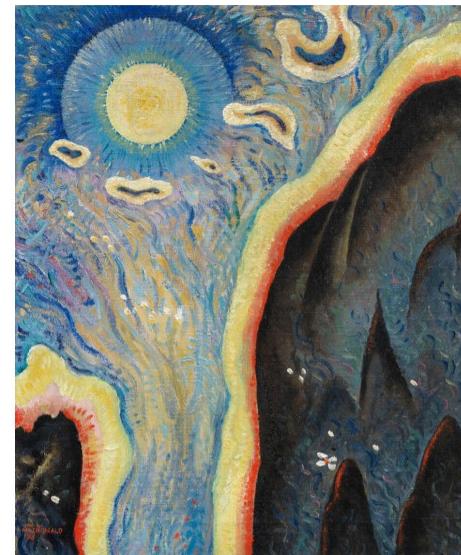
In this small work, with its shimmering imagery and its richly painted ground, Macdonald achieved the perfect realization of his struggle to portray the nature of cosmic reality. Like *Departing Day*, this lyrical semi-abstract work was created in October 1936, during the flourish of inspiration that overwhelmed the artist during the last few weeks of his stay in Nootka Sound.

The painting represents a symbolic statement about the nature of the universe. A fine network of lines fills the surface against the rich purple ground, where a single orb is poised in the balance. Space is compressed. Fascinated by contemporary scientific discoveries, Macdonald wrote in one of his notebooks:

If we wave our hand we can feel the obstruction of the air but we cannot feel the Ether. We think of our earth as very solid and we know it is rushing around the sun at the enormous speed of 60,000 miles per hour, but it finds no obstruction in the Ether, there is no retardation of its velocity; and yet the study of radio-activity has quite lately shown us that the Ether is ... millions of times denser than [iron]; and yet it permeates all matter like a sieve.<sup>1</sup>

He concluded that this enigma was but one more "example of Positive and Negative, the Invisible, the Ether, as the Real plus the Visible, the Material Universe as its Negative, the Unreal," adding that "with perfect perception we should know that the only reality is the spiritual, the Here comprising of all space and the Now of all time."<sup>2</sup>

On his return to Vancouver in 1936 Macdonald continued the exploration of abstraction in the series of works he called his modalities. In 1938 he submitted four of them—*Day Break, (May Morning)*, dated 1936 but most likely painted in 1937 in Vancouver, given the fact that it is oil on canvas, and *Rain, Winter*, and *Chrysanthemum* (all 1938)—to the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts show at the Vancouver Art Gallery. They must have shocked many viewers, given that, as late as 1928 in Vancouver, many of the local critics found the modernism of the Group of Seven beyond their comprehension.



Jock Macdonald, *Day Break (May Morning)*, c. 1937, oil on canvas, 56 x 46 cm, private collection.

## FALL (MODALITY 16) 1937



Jock Macdonald, *Fall (Modality 16)*, 1937  
Oil on canvas, 71.1 x 61 cm  
Vancouver Art Gallery



Fall is the most monumental of the modalities Macdonald painted. We do not know the total number of modalities he produced, but number sixteen was completed within a year of his return from Nootka Sound. Despite his decision to keep these experimental works secret after his return to Vancouver, Macdonald was preoccupied with his search for a uniquely personal abstract expression in his work.

The central motif of *Fall* is a triangle that appears to aspire to the heavens. Its elongated peak seems to continue its upward ascent beyond the horizontal element of the frame. Abstract forms are disposed evenly across the surface. The only suggestions of representation are the curvilinear Art Deco designs of tree, leaf, and butterfly. The complicated colour harmony suggests autumnal richness. Calling on his experience as a textile designer, Macdonald has succeeded in creating a stage in which every element is strongly tied to the surface of the canvas. Only through the pattern of the central striated area in the lower third of the canvas does the painting speak to the infinite and timeless world—the fourth, fifth, and sixth dimensions.<sup>1</sup>

This work, like many of the others from this period such as *Spring Awakening*, c. 1937, is strongly geometric, linear, and decorative in style and composition and was likely one of a series representing the seasons. Concerned about the dominance of line and design in his work, Macdonald also experimented with a more painterly approach to abstraction in the dynamic *Birth of Spring*, 1939. In its freedom it reflects Macdonald's ongoing struggle to break away from the restrictions of his design background.



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Spring Awakening*, c. 1938, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 70 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *Birth of Spring*, 1939, oil on panel, 38.4 x 30.5 cm, private collection.

**INDIAN BURIAL, NOOTKA 1937**

Jock Macdonald, *Indian Burial, Nootka*, 1937

Oil on canvas, 91.9 x 71.8 cm

Vancouver Art Gallery



In this image, as in his other Nootka sketches and paintings, Macdonald attempts to capture the spirit of life in the Nuu-chah-nulth village. Although he painted a number of small oil-on-panel works, he completed only one major canvas, *Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound, B.C.*, 1935, during his stay at Nootka. This work, based on a sketch he had done in situ, was painted after the artist's return to Vancouver.

Though the graveyard and the priest in *Indian Burial* are clearly Christian, Macdonald has added a level of complexity to the narrative by introducing in the right foreground a mourner with a traditional ceremonial mask. The mask was absent in the preliminary sketch, and it seems to challenge our entry into the scene, its expressive features dramatically evoking the continuing presence of the power of the old ways.<sup>1</sup>

The painting is striking in its organization, displaying a designer's delight in carefully balanced areas of colour and pattern. The priest, his hand raised, creates a strong vertical focus, leading us both forward toward the open grave and the mask and then beyond the blue cross on the casket toward two centrally located crosses in the middle ground and on, following the curving path, into the distance, where totem poles and a lighthouse border the ocean. In September 1938 the Vancouver Art Gallery reproduced the recently acquired painting on the cover of its *Bulletin*, and the following year included it in the Canadian exhibition at the San Francisco Golden Gate Exposition.<sup>2</sup>

Though Macdonald would return to themes from Nootka in later works, *Drying Herring Roe*, 1938, was the last representational canvas he painted of life in Nootka. At the time, he considered it the best painting he had ever made. He worried that the unfamiliar subject matter would not be understood, so he explained in some detail the Nuu-chah-nulth custom of taking twenty-foot branches out in canoes and submerging them in deep water. "In two weeks the branches are raised up, plastered with herring eggs [which are hung up] to dry out and cure in the sun. The village is festooned with masses of mimosa coloured (yellowish) hanging foliage."<sup>3</sup> The painting received immediate praise and was included in the *Century of Canadian Art* exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London that same year.



Jock Macdonald, *Indian Burial at Nootka*, 1935, ink on paper with pencil grid laid over top, 7.4 x 4 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery. A preparatory sketch for *Indian Burial, Nootka*, 1937.

## RUSSIAN FANTASY 1946



Jock Macdonald, *Russian Fantasy*, 1946  
Watercolour and ink on paper, 21.7 x 35.7 cm  
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

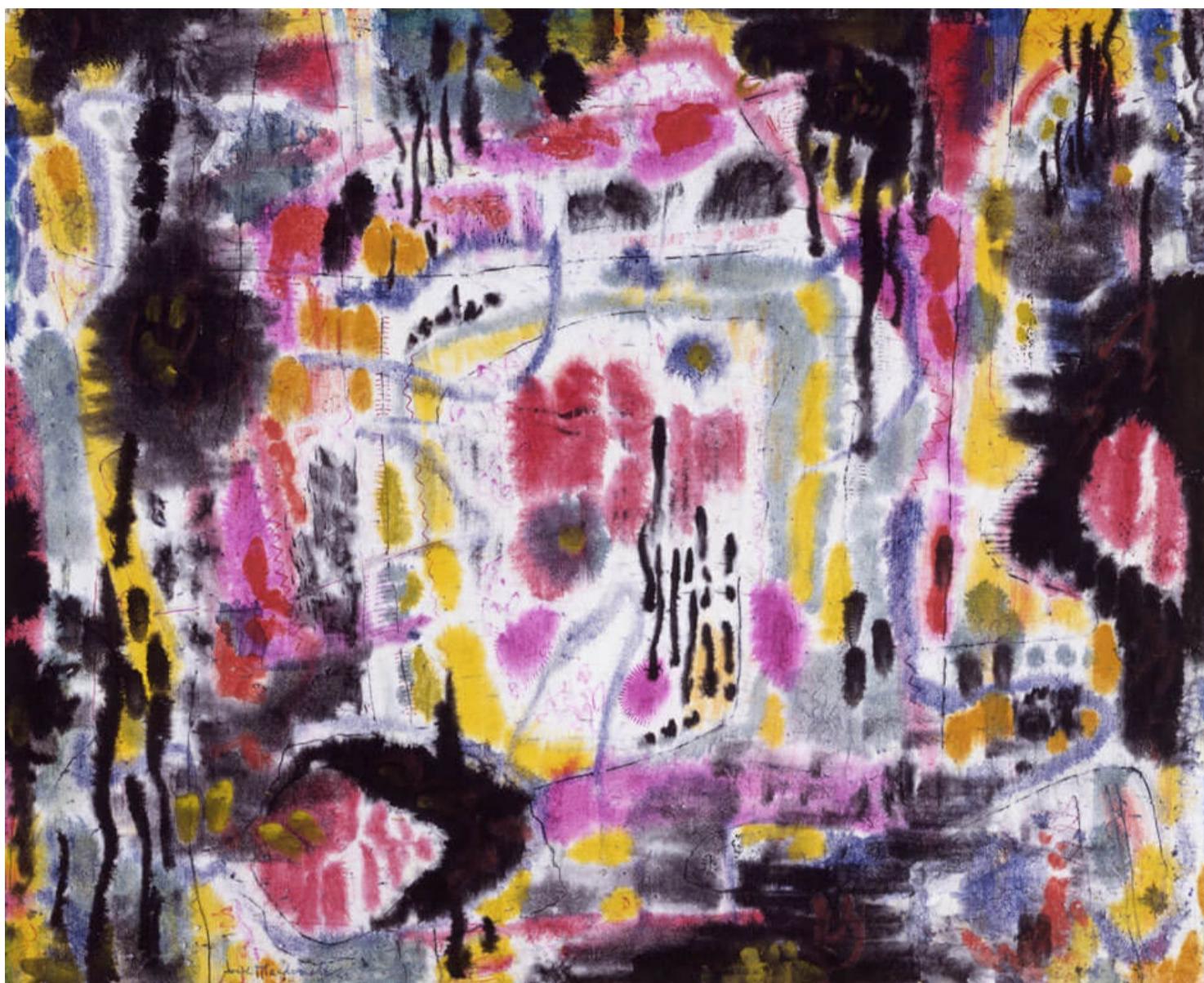
*Russian Fantasy* is typical of the fully realized automatic watercolour paintings that Macdonald created between 1945 and 1952. This work reflects the impact of the automatic painting style that Macdonald learned from the British Surrealist artist and psychiatrist Grace Pailthorpe (1883-1971) and her colleague, artist-poet Reuben Mednikoff (1906-1972), during several months of intensive daily study in the fall of 1945. Through a painstaking process, and closely guided by his mentors, Macdonald learned how to free his mind as he created drawings and paintings. Once the automatic drawing was completed, his mentors encouraged him to find and extrapolate imagery that lay hidden in the drawings.

Through the application of overlapping wet washes and by grading deep purple through Prussian blue, Macdonald achieved an exquisite richness. The brilliance of his colour creates a work in which the painted surface breathes. Slowly turning the painting a full 360 degrees as he painted, Macdonald pulled fanciful creatures and humorous elaborations from the abstract configurations. He then embellished the surface with a personal vocabulary of hieroglyphic signs and symbols that had been stored in his memory since his classes on the history of ornament. Ultimately, it is line that unifies the disparate, more-painterly elements of *Russian Fantasy*.



Jock Macdonald, *Untitled (Automatic)*, 1948, oil on canvas, 69.8 x 83.8 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

The compositional format of this painting is of special interest because he returned to it frequently in future years. In order to fill out the rectangle, he encircled the central image with an irregular, closed shape that frames it against the white ground. Macdonald seems to have worked his composition from the centre to the periphery, not only filling out the rectangle with the framing device but also establishing a sense of motion through a system of expansive lines and the extension of shapes.

**SCENT OF A SUMMER GARDEN 1952**

Jock Macdonald, *Scent of a Summer Garden*, 1952  
Watercolour and coloured inks on paper, 35.6 x 45.7 cm  
Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston

This exquisite painting represents a significant departure for Macdonald, particularly in its free and explosive surface. Macdonald created it while he was the summer artist-in-residence at the Arts Centre of Greater Victoria (now the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria). The palette is lavish with hot pink, yellow, and blues, with bursts and squiggles of abstracted drawing in rich black ink laid over the colours, locking them into place. The painting differs dramatically from *The Argument*, painted the same year, which, though it also uses black-ink linear embellishments, is more typical of Macdonald's earlier automatic experiments with amusing narrative elements.



Jock Macdonald, *The Argument*, 1952,  
watercolour and ink on paper,  
24.8 x 35.5 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



It is interesting to compare *Scent of a Summer Garden* with the watercolour *Fabric of Dreams*, 1952, which Macdonald also painted in Victoria. The palette is similar, but, again, Macdonald uses the black ink to extrapolate the image of a rooster, an abstracted face, and a number of churches and crosses from the automatically painted surface below. The effect echoes the rich imagery of the Indonesian batiks that fascinated him.

No imaginary figures are extrapolated from the painting in *Scent of a Summer Garden*. Still working automatically, Macdonald disperses the compositional elements evenly across the surface, creating a central open area in the composition where the white space breathes and the paint pulsates. The energy and freedom in the drip and splatter application of the paint and the ink speaks more to Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) than to the majority of his automatics with linear embellishments.

In 1948, when *Life* magazine published a round-table discussion on modern art that included major figures in the American art world such as critic Clement Greenberg and art historians Meyer Schapiro and H.W. Janson, Macdonald complained that they had missed the essential intention of abstract painting. "Nobody seemed to relate the space dynamics of modern art to the new 20th century concept of space in science, architecture or anything else," he wrote. "How they cannot see parallel concepts in all forms of creative work seems amazing."<sup>1</sup> It was that space dynamic that Macdonald sought to achieve in this elegant and fascinating painting.



Jock Macdonald, *Fabric of Dreams*, 1952, watercolour on paper, 37 x 46.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



## BLACK EVOLVING FORMS 1953



Jock Macdonald, *Black Evolving Forms*, 1953  
Oil on canvas board, 40.6 x 50.8 cm  
Private collection, Toronto

*Black Evolving Forms* is one of Macdonald's most successful early non-objective paintings in oil. The composition is strong, with an irregular black circular motif suggestive of bird forms heightened by an orange ground, but its apparent simplicity is deceptive.



Macdonald seems to be experimenting with the “push-pull theory” he learned in the classes he attended in the late 1940s with Hans Hofmann (1880–1966). Hofmann said that shapes and colours interact to create the feeling of both space and movement, actively engaging the viewer with the work. Warm colours appear to advance, cool ones to recede, as the light and dark values and overlapping shapes create the illusion that the composition is breathing. In *Black Evolving Forms* Macdonald subtly situates an almost monochromatic ground against an irregular square of a lighter shade while employing a painted grey border as an internal framing device. The layering of forms in a shallow space and the tension between these layers of colour suggest an awareness of Hofmann’s theories and a remarkable growth and development in Macdonald’s style.

Compared with earlier automatic paintings in oil, such as *Ocean Legend*, 1947, in which Macdonald attempted to create the dynamic and flowing qualities of his watercolours, this work is fluid and uncluttered, though he still has not achieved the leap in scale that acrylics would soon make possible. His colour, however, is freed from the constraints of line and design elements present in works such as *Bird and Environment*, 1948.

Macdonald must have been pleased with *Black Evolving Forms*. In January 1954 he submitted it to the Willistead Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Windsor) exhibition *Four Modern Canadians*, which featured his art alongside that of Hortense Gordon (1889–1961), Sydney H. Watson (1911–1981), and Percy Taçon (1902–1983).<sup>1</sup> In February he arranged to have the painting transferred to the Roberts Gallery in Toronto so it could be included in the first Painters Eleven exhibition. Macdonald had enormous faith that this group would introduce contemporary abstract art to the Canadian public outside Quebec—and it did.



Jock Macdonald, *Bird and Environment*, 1948, oil on canvas, 64.9 x 88.1 cm, private collection.

**AIRY JOURNEY 1957**

**Jock Macdonald, Airy Journey, 1957**  
Oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite, 112.5 x 127.5 cm  
Hart House Permanent Collection, University of Toronto

*Airy Journey* demonstrates the freedom and fluidity Macdonald discovered when he mixed plastic and oil paints together. "Using Lucite with oil has enabled me to paint with a flow and quickly but not slapdash," he exulted.<sup>1</sup> The painting, dominated by its bold and sweeping central black motif, is beautifully resolved. The solid red-and-yellow layer of paint is located in a shallow space between the delicately mottled white ground and the dynamic gestural application of black. Light emanates from the white areas within the painting. His student William Ronald (1926-1998) observed that he learned from Macdonald's skillful use of white how to enhance the effect of light and transparency and create additional dimensional effects.



In this painting, even the indirect allusions to landscape found in *Desert Rim*, 1957, are no longer present. It immediately recalls the work of the Abstract Expressionist artists, in particular Franz Kline (1910–1962). Yet *Airy Journey* is also the logical outcome of Macdonald's exploration with Lucite and his search for a modern expression that captured in painting the experience of modernity after Einstein. It and similar works represent in a larger format and more powerful medium the continuation of his search for the freedom and expressive use of paint he had achieved in his automatic watercolours, such as *Russian Fantasy*, 1946.<sup>2</sup>

Macdonald had finally found a method for integrating the ambiguous space and the shifting forms he sought to portray. In *Airy Journey* he does so without sacrificing his concern for the unity of the plane and without relying on the cubist grid—as he had in his earlier attempts in oil, such as *White Bark*, 1954—to move beyond the smaller watercolour format. In Macdonald's solo show at Hart House in the fall of 1957, twenty of the twenty-nine paintings had been painted with Lucite.



Jock Macdonald, *White Bark*, 1954, oil on hard board, 102.2 x 81.3 cm, Glenbow Museum, Calgary.



LEGEND OF THE ORIENT 1958



Jock Macdonald, *Legend of the Orient*, 1958  
Oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite, 137.2 x 121.9 cm  
Private collection, Toronto

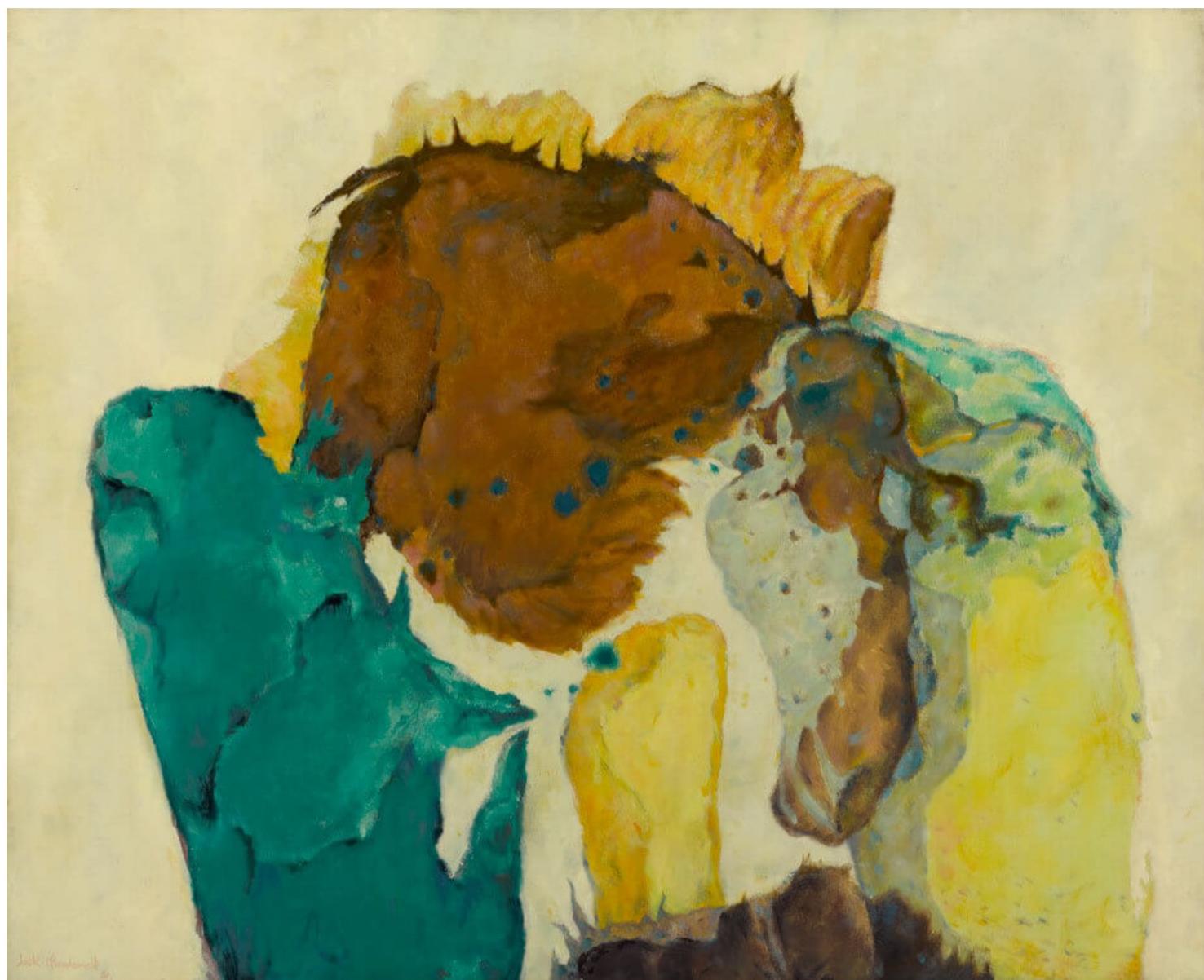


In this painting, Macdonald moves from the organic references he often used in his non-objective works to a more monumental concept of the cosmos. He continues, however, to explore negative and positive space and spatial ambiguity through colour and abstract imagery. Here hard-edged defined shapes replace the characteristic undefined perimeters of floating forms in works such as *Slumber Deep*, 1957, with its amorphous black ground, loose red rectangles, and off-centre white band that anchors the image. In contrast, in this painting and others, such as *Contemplation*, 1958, dramatic, almost geometric shapes of colour predominate.

Large and majestic, the shapes in *Legend of the Orient* are flat and parallel to the picture plane. Each colour plane, set in subtle tension with its neighbour and the ground, retains its own integrity. The shapes are flat and simple, and the stately forms are unequivocal, potent elements of bold colour. These paintings reflect Macdonald's confidence in the works he was producing and his belief in their uniqueness. When they were exhibited at Toronto's Park Gallery in the fall of 1958, he wrote that his painting was "decidedly different from anything in this country."<sup>1</sup> Offers to exhibit in England and in Texas confirmed his conviction that his work held more than local interest.<sup>2</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Slumber Deep*, 1957, oil and Lucite 44 on canvas, 121.9 x 135.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

**NATURE EVOLVING** 1960

Jock Macdonald, *Nature Evolving*, 1960  
Oil and Lucite 44 on canvas, 111.8 x 137.2 cm  
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto

In *Nature Evolving* and similar late works, the “other energies” that Macdonald sought to represent are revealed in exquisite harmonies of colour and form. These moving paintings capture the essence of the cycles and rhythms of nature rather than its outward manifestations. Noting how the organic forms in this work emerge from the painting’s ground, critic Hugo McPherson wrote: “Here, in high degree, is the sensitive strength, the integrity and repose which are Jock Macdonald’s particular gifts.”<sup>1</sup>

In this painting, Macdonald moves beyond the all-over compositions of paintings such as *Fleeting Breath*, 1959, with its tightly woven and exquisitely balanced forms and limited palette, to concentrate on the powerful central image. It comes alive primarily through colour and the tension established



among fluid elemental shapes.<sup>2</sup>

In *Nature Evolving* the image rises from the base of the canvas to occupy the surface, where it breathes in an atmosphere of infinite space. The surging shapes and variegated colours suggest growth and life. Students recount that Macdonald often showed them slides of microscopic specimens from nature to illustrate the elemental patterns and rhythms in nature, and it is likely that these slides provided the inspiration for this work.<sup>3</sup>



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Fleeting Breath*, 1959, oil and Lucite 44 on canvas, 122.2 x 149.2 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *Fugitive Articulation*, 1959, oil on canvas, 107 x 121.9 cm, University of Regina Collection, MacKenzie Art Gallery.

*Nature Evolving*, like *Figurative Articulation*, 1959, which is similar in its dynamic composition, represents Macdonald's continuing quest for a meaningful contemporary artistic expression. Rather than representing the image viewed through the microscope, Macdonald has sought to express not "the exact appearance of nature, but rather ... the spirit therein."<sup>4</sup> The search he began in 1934 with *Formative Colour Activity* had finally come to fruition.



## FAR OFF DRUMS 1960



Jock Macdonald, *Far Off Drums*, 1960  
Oil and Lucite 44 on canvas, 91.3 x 106.6 cm  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

In *Far Off Drums*, an exquisite painting that is both vital and harmonious, Macdonald resolved the crucial issue of space and the relation between figure and ground. It transcends its own material reality to echo the life of the spirit that for years he had sought to portray. Macdonald completed this work about a year before he died, and it resonates with the melancholy knowledge that his dream of having years dedicated to painting once he retired from teaching would not be fulfilled.



Macdonald uses painterly line as a structuring element to contain thinly applied areas of colour. His line is as classically elegant here as that of the Italian painter Duccio (c. 1255-1319): it flows gracefully on an open ground as light permeates the composition, and materiality, or form, is suggested only in the delicately coloured areas. Line itself is ethereal. Macdonald no longer relies on the heavy and structural underpinning or applied surface design he had used in the modalities, or the decorative embellishments of his automatics. Rather, the elements here are fluid, and there is a finely balanced tension between line and the thinly painted surface.

Macdonald included this painting in his solo exhibition at the Here and Now Gallery in Toronto, in January 1960. He followed his usual custom of titling it just before it went on show. In the biographical sketch he wrote for the gallery, he stated: "An artist must seek to discover new forms of beauty. If not an arrestment occurs and art becomes a superfluous aestheticism."<sup>1</sup> True artists, he felt, can find themselves at one with the cosmic order of nature.

Macdonald hoped that his students would create "twentieth-century masterpieces."<sup>2</sup> In paintings such as *Far Off Drums*, the teacher fulfilled in his own work the destiny he desired for his students.



# SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

Jock Macdonald was a leading pioneer of abstract painting in Canada. Committed to the belief that contemporary art had to be based on "20th-century concepts about nature, space, time and motion," he became a staunch advocate for contemporary artistic expression. He was a founding member of the Canadian Group of Painters and Painters Eleven, and he established the Calgary Group. A dedicated teacher, he was a role model and mentor to several generations of artists in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. As an artist, teacher, and activist, he had a profound influence on Canadian art.



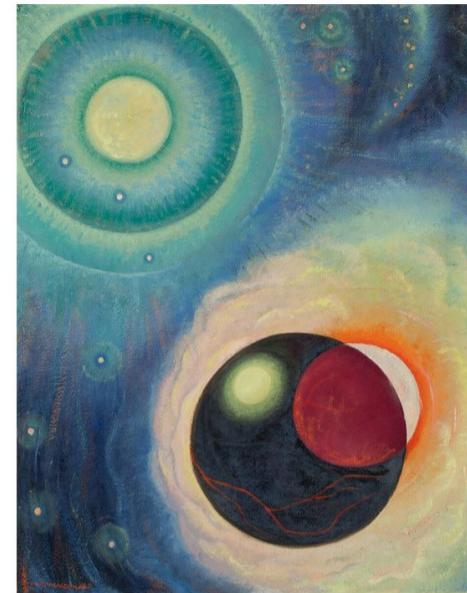
### ARTIST-PHILOSOPHER

Throughout his life as an artist, Jock Macdonald was engaged in a search for new forms of beauty. As he wrote to H.O. McCurry in 1937, "I have been searching for a new expression in art.... To fail to follow through the force which is driving me—+ which I clearly believe is a true creative art—would be destruction to my soul."<sup>1</sup>

Guided by current theories of art and aesthetics, science and mathematics, he sought to create paintings in which the spiritual nature of the universe would become evident. His search was for an artistic expression that embodied an "aware[ness] of the new space consciousness of our time, the psychological reactions to vibrant colour and the dynamic force of modern composition."<sup>2</sup>



LEFT: Jock Macdonald near Lytton on the Thompson River, B.C., c. 1932, photograph by the Williams Brothers, Vancouver. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *Departing Day*, 1939, oil on canvas, 71.5 x 56.1 cm, Art Gallery of Hamilton.



In the late 1920s and 1930s in Vancouver, the spiritual in art and the artist's search for the "universal centre" were, along with contemporary artistic expression and the interrelationship of the arts, regular topics of discussion at the weekly Vanderpant musicales that Macdonald attended. There the photographer John Vanderpant (1884–1939) presented lectures, slide shows, and recordings focusing on the work of contemporary artists and musicians. His talks focused on modern art, including the Group of Seven as well as European modernists such as Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944), Amédée Ozenfant (1866–1966), and Piet Mondrian (1872–1944), and composers largely unknown to his audience. By the early 1930s Vanderpant was experimenting with photographs of imagery abstracted from nature—*Heart of the Cabbage*, c. 1929–30, for example—that he called "thought-expressions." This term likely derived from the "thought-forms" that the British theosophist Annie Besant (1847–1933) wrote about in her search to understand the mysteries that united the universe, the divine, and humanity.

Fred Varley (1881–1969) had begun to explore Buddhism and Eastern mysticism, as is clear in his portrait *Dharana*, 1932, while members of the Vanderpant group were reading "Revelation of Art in Canada" (1926) by Lawren Harris (1885–1970)—who was increasingly drawn to theosophical concepts in his art.<sup>3</sup> Artists also read Bertram Brooker's syndicated column on contemporary art that appeared in *The Vancouver Daily Province* from 1928 to 1930 and the inaugural 1928–29 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, edited by Brooker (1888–1955),<sup>4</sup> in which he reinforced the idea that art should be contemporary and reflect the time in which it was created.<sup>5</sup>



F.H. Varley, *Dharana*, c. 1932 oil on canvas, 86.4 x 101.6 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Dharana is the concentration of mind and sense on a single thought, an attempt to find freedom in the immaterial essence of reality.

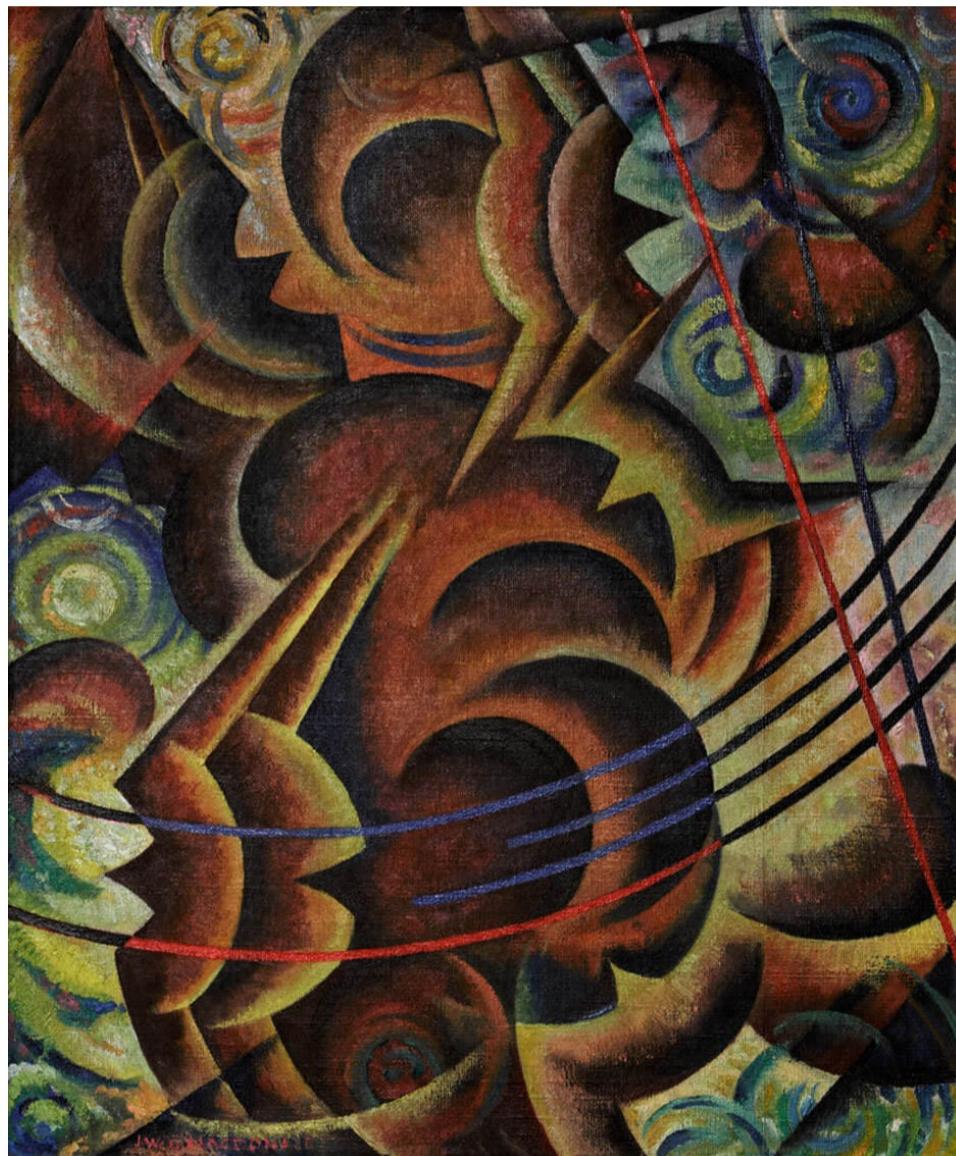
In his seminal public lecture "Art in Relation to Nature" at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1940, Macdonald argued that pictorial form must reflect the current understanding of reality. He cited Albert Einstein and the work of artist-theorists such as Kandinsky, who argued in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912) that the concept of matter was being replaced by "the theory of electrons" or "waves in motion."<sup>6</sup> Macdonald summed up the objectives that had guided him ever since his earliest exploration of abstraction in 1934—and which would continue to shape his credo:

Art is not found in the mere imitation of nature, but the artist does perceive through the study of nature the ... one order to which the whole universe conforms. Art ... is trying to tell us something, something about nature, something about the universe, and something about life.

... Art now reaches the place where it becomes the expression of ideals and spiritual aspirations. The artist no longer strives to imitate the exact appearance of nature but, rather, to express the spirit therein.<sup>7</sup>

Troubled by the Depression and the political situation in North America and Europe, Macdonald sought to embody a higher order in his art.<sup>8</sup> His search was for a "universal language" of art.<sup>9</sup> He wrote to H.O. McCurry, director of the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, about his abstractions from the late 1930s such as *Rain*, 1938, and *The Wave*, 1939:

The "modalities" are thought idioms of nature—not completely geometrical, but containing a nature form in abstraction.... It means the same as saying the 4th dimension is an extension of the 3rd dimension; it contains an essence of the 3rd but has a different space & a different time, & through its added value of motion, it is an entirely new dimension. And the awakening of a new consciousness will arise out of the new knowledge from the slow understanding of the 4th dimension. For me, abstract & semi-abstract creations of pure idiom are statements of the new awakening consciousness. Thus I have more than a surface interest in the experiments I make on the extension of nature forms.<sup>10</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Flight*, 1939, oil on canvas, 36.5 x 46.4 cm, private collection.



Macdonald continued to build on these ideas to guide his approach to painting. In his letters to McCurry and to Maxwell Bates (1906–1980) in Calgary, he took pains to describe his philosophy in detail. In the introduction to an exhibition catalogue for the Willistead Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Windsor) in 1954, he reiterated his basic principles:

Art ... must seek to discover new forms of Beauty.

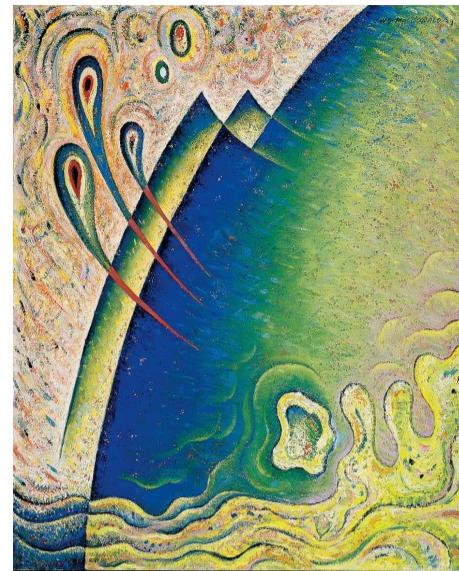
... Art is an expression of man's consciousness.

The Artist should endeavour to express the consciousness of the time in which he lives.

Only through this search can new forms of Beauty be discovered.

The 20th Century art expressions are formulated on man's new concepts about nature, space, time and motion.

... To be creative, truly creative, one cannot add anything to enrich the art of past centuries but must (try to) speak in the idioms of the time in which one lives.<sup>11</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *The Wave*, 1939, oil and sand on canvas, 102.2 x 82 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

### PIONEERING ABSTRACT ARTIST

In 1934 Macdonald painted his first semi-abstract painting *Formative Colour Activity*. Though it would be two years before he resumed his experiments, this work marks the beginning of the artist's search to express the underlying principles of nature abstractly.

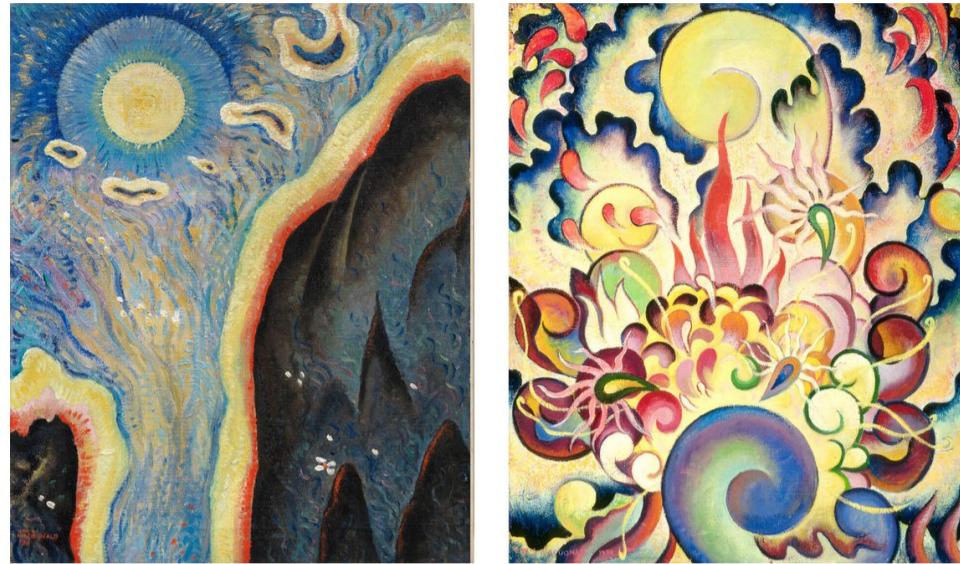
In 1936 he returned to abstraction in the series of works he called his modalities. Though he had kept these abstract experiments secret from all but a small circle of supportive artists, in 1938 he submitted four of them—*Day Break (May Morning)*, c. 1937,<sup>12</sup> and *Rain, Winter*, and *Chrysanthemum* (all 1938)—to the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts show at the Vancouver Art Gallery. They must have shocked many viewers, given that, as late as 1928 in Vancouver, many of the local critics found the modernism of the Group of Seven beyond their comprehension.

Although Toronto had hosted the Société Anonyme's exhibition in 1927, and Bertram Brooker (1888–1955) had mounted a solo show of his abstract paintings there, most of the critics had been hostile. In Quebec, Paul-Émile Borduas (1905–1960) did not exhibit his first automatiste paintings until 1942. Macdonald, the first B.C. artist to exhibit abstract painting, was therefore surprised at the relatively positive response to his four modalities. In July 1938 he sent his semi-abstract painting *Pilgrimage*, 1937,<sup>13</sup> to the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, along with the more representational *Drying Herring Roe*, 1938, for the *Century of Canadian Art* exhibition at the Tate Gallery in London. In 1939 *Rain*, 1938, and *Flight*, 1939, were included in the Canadian Group of Painters exhibition at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario), and *Winter*, 1938, was selected for the exhibition of Canadian art at the New York World's Fair.

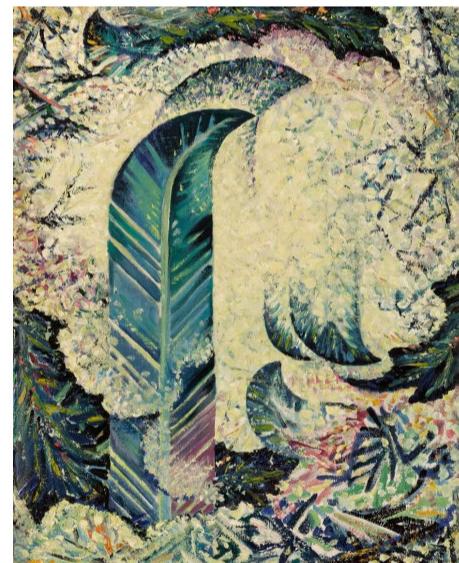
In 1941 the Vancouver Art Gallery mounted Macdonald's first solo exhibition.<sup>14</sup> Five years later it gave him another solo exhibition featuring his most recent exploration of abstraction—the automatic paintings that had become the focus of his work since he began to explore automatism under the tutelage of Grace Pailthorpe (1883–1971) and Reuben Mednikoff (1906–1972). In 1947 the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) arranged a solo show featuring most of these works, which then travelled to Hart House at the University of Toronto, fortuitously coinciding with Macdonald's move to teach in Toronto at the Ontario College of Art.

In Toronto, Macdonald championed abstract art in his teaching and played a key role in the opening of the art scene to non-objective art. Several of his former students would become leaders in the fight to gain recognition for abstraction. In 1952 Alexandra Luke (1901–1967), who had studied automatic painting with Macdonald in Banff, organized the *Canadian Abstract Exhibition*, the first national exhibition dedicated to Canadian abstract painting, and asked Macdonald to lecture on abstraction at the opening of the exhibition.<sup>15</sup> When Painters Eleven was invited to exhibit with the *Twentieth Annual Exhibition of American Abstract Artists* at the Riverside Museum in New York in April 1956, the American critics generally praised their work, and Macdonald's *Twilight Forms*, 1955, was reproduced in *Time* magazine. (The article identified Macdonald as the unofficial leader of the group.)<sup>16</sup>

Yet Macdonald felt that this success was all but ignored at home, where the work of Quebec abstract artists was championed and much better known. He complained that when the art historian and curator Jean-René Ostiguy (1925–2016) lectured at the Riverside Museum, he "spoke about nothing other than the French Canadian abstract artists ... right in the room where Painters XI's work was exhibited."<sup>17</sup> In an effort to set the record straight, Macdonald wrote to Maxwell Bates (1906–1980) to explain that his own explorations of abstraction predated those of Borduas, though he gave credit to Bertram Brooker and Lawren Harris (1885–1970) as the "first in the field."<sup>18</sup>



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Day Break (May Morning)*, c. 1937, oil on canvas, 56 x 46 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *Chrysanthemum*, 1938, oil on canvas, 55 x 45.6 cm, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg. Macdonald described his modalities as "expressions of thought in relation to nature."



Jock Macdonald, *Winter*, 1938, oil on canvas, 56 x 45.9 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

By the end of the 1950s the situation in Toronto and in English Canada more generally had changed, and non-objective art had begun to take hold. As Quebec critic Rodolphe de Repentigny wrote on the occasion of the 1958 exhibition of Painters Eleven in Montreal,<sup>19</sup> "scarcely three or four years [after their first exhibition] they were already considered [established] painters."<sup>20</sup> In 1957 Macdonald's significance was confirmed when Canadian Art published "Jock Macdonald: Painter-Explorer" by Maxwell Bates.<sup>21</sup>



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Twilight Forms*, 1955, oil on canvas, 79.8 x 99.5 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. RIGHT: "Rebels in Manhattan," *Time*, May 7, 1956.



LEFT: Opening of the 20th Annual Exhibition of American Abstract Artists, New York, 1956, photograph by Bob Cowans. From left: Jock Macdonald, M.B. Kesserling (vice consul, Canadian consulate), Nettie S. Horch (director, Riverside Museum, New York), Alexandra Luke, Jack Bush, Helen Ronald, William Ronald. RIGHT: "Jock Macdonald: Painter-Explorer," an article by Maxwell Bates in Canadian Art, Summer 1957.

### Jock Macdonald, Painter-Explorer

MAXWELL BATES

**E**XPLORERS are sometimes men of action, sometimes men of ideas. The explorer of ideas, when a painter, cannot accept a safe career by early finding a suitable style, not too unpopular, and settling down to its development. Instead, he makes his way beyond the region mapped and appreciated by the art-interested public. The explorers are not only the most creative artists, they contribute most to the art. Their trials and tribulations come early; success often comes late.

Jock Macdonald is such an explorer of visual ideas.

Born at Thurso in the north of Scotland, he son of an architect, was educated in Thurso and Edinburgh and began his career with a year as an architect's assistant in Edinburgh. The war took him to France as a Lewis gunner, and he was not demobilized until 1919. Then he studied at the Edinburgh College of Art,

where, specializing in textile design and wood-carving, he obtained his diploma in design in 1922. The form his training as an artist took, in architecture and design as opposed to the usual drawing from casts and life, may have drawn him to the abstract idiom. Both architecture and pure design are abstract, and he has seldom used the human figure as a subject.

His formal education completed, he put in three years as a textile designer in England, then a year as head of design at the Lincoln School of Art. By 1926 he was married and, seeking an opportunity to gain experience and advancement, he accepted an appointment as head of design at the Vancouver School of Art.

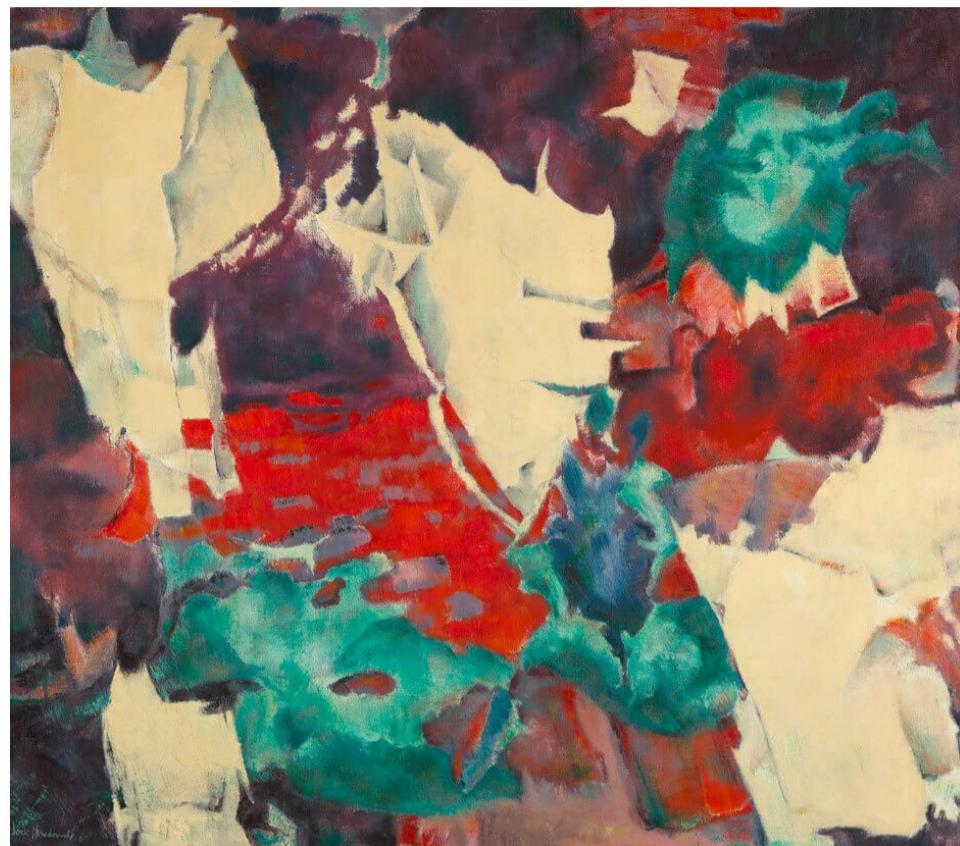
His career as a painter began that year. His first paintings in oil and water colour were of the landscape of British Columbia. In 1933 he founded the British Columbia



JOCK MACDONALD  
*Two Forms in Space*  
Pyroxylon  
Shown in the Second Biennial of Canadian Art, 1957

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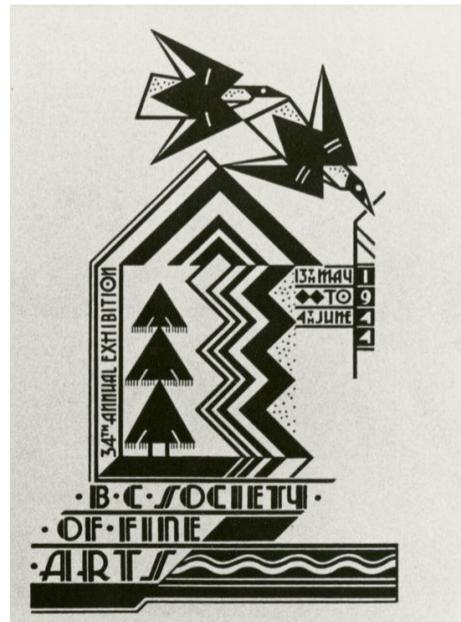
Macdonald's paintings in oil and Lucite were widely recognized for their unique vision and mastery. He was most productive in his last few years when, having found his voice, he worked steadily to create paintings to meet the demands for solo exhibitions in Toronto—at Hart House in 1957, the Park Gallery in 1958, the Arts & Letters Club in 1959, and the Here and Now Gallery in 1960. Macdonald was thrilled when the Art Gallery of Toronto (now Art Gallery of Ontario) offered him a retrospective exhibition in 1960. He wrote to Bates, "The critics spoke very highly of my work, the artists have been quite appreciative and the public thoroughly interested."<sup>22</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *All Things Prevail*, 1960, Lucite 44 on canvas, 106.7 x 122.1 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

### BUILDER OF ART COMMUNITIES

When Macdonald arrived in Vancouver in 1926, there were few artists' organizations in Western Canada. Recognizing their value, he participated, often as a founding member, and accepted leadership positions with several of them. He began exhibiting with the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1931. In 1933 he was one of the twenty-eight founding members of the Canadian Group of Painters, the successor of the Group of Seven—a diverse group of progressive artists dedicated to achieving greater recognition for Canadian artists.<sup>23</sup> He exhibited with them regularly both in Canada and the United States.



LEFT: Jock Macdonald's design for the catalogue cover for the 34th Annual Exhibition of the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts, 1944. RIGHT: First Conference of Canadian Artists at Queen's University (Kingston Conference), photograph by Hazen Edward Sise. From left, front row: André Biéler, Michael Forster, A.Y. Jackson, Lowrie Warrener; second row: Alma Duncan (white dress) and Tom Stone; third row: Miller Brittain, Walter Abell; fourth row: Jock Macdonald.

As a member of the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts, he was elected vice-president in 1939 and president in 1941.<sup>24</sup> In that role he attended the groundbreaking Kingston Conference, which for the first time brought artists from across Canada together to develop an agenda for the arts in Canada. He



became a charter member of the Federation of Canadian Artists, the national organization that carried forward the challenge of working on behalf of artists across the country.

When he moved to Calgary in 1946, Macdonald, frustrated by the lack of opportunity for artists who were exploring contemporary expression, wrote: "There are some creative ... younger artists + I am trying to have them form a small group, to lift themselves free from the frustrations they have so long endured from The Alberta Society of Artists."<sup>25</sup> By April 1947 he had facilitated the formation of an association of "six progressive young artists," the Calgary Group, to focus on non-figurative painting and organized an exhibition for them at the Vancouver Art Gallery.<sup>26</sup> He also joined the more conservative Southern Section of the Federation of Canadian Artists, with the intention of creating a more progressive agenda, and was elected to the executive.<sup>27</sup> After his move to Toronto, he joined the Ontario Society of Artists and, in 1952, became an executive member. That same year he was elected president of Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour.



Jock Macdonald, *Contemplation*, 1958, oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite, 68.5 x 122 cm, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

In 1954 Macdonald became a founding member of Painters Eleven. He participated in their exhibitions and promoted their work. During his year in Europe in 1955, he called on art galleries in London and in Paris to familiarize them with the work of his Canadian colleagues and particularly Painters Eleven. After visiting galleries in the United Kingdom and Paris, he wrote that he strongly believed that "in Canada there is more distinctive and imaginative painting to be found than over here."<sup>28</sup> In the spring of 1958 he was invited to curate a room dedicated to the work of abstract and non-objective artists at the Canadian National Exhibition—a task that still remained a challenge, given the lingering controversy in Toronto over the legitimacy of abstract art.<sup>29</sup>

### TEACHER AND MENTOR

Except for his eighteen months at Nootka from 1935 to 1936 and his sojourn in Europe in 1955, Macdonald taught every year after his arrival in Canada in 1926 and often during the summers as well. He was an instructor at the post-secondary level in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto; at the junior high and secondary school levels in Vancouver; and in art centres at Banff, Edmonton, and Doon during the summers. As professor of art at the UNESCO International Students' Seminars, he taught in Breda, the Netherlands, in 1949 and in Pontigny, France, in 1950. He was also involved in education in Victoria, B.C., where he was the artist-in-residence at the Art Centre of Greater Victoria (now the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria) in 1952.

Macdonald's letters to friends and colleagues recount his ongoing frustration with the stultifying and restrictive conditions in which he often worked. They describe his battles with administrators and teaching colleagues who, in their commitment to representational art, were hostile to Macdonald for promoting contemporary art and expression. Macdonald tried to revise the traditional curriculum, sometimes successfully, and sometimes working outside the system to accomplish his goals. Describing his early months at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary as "one big fight," he succeeded in revising the curriculum to include "all the creative + experimental work I can push into [the students]."<sup>30</sup>

On his arrival at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, he introduced a course "relating to 20th century creative expressions." It was not only recognized but accepted as "absolutely necessary"—a major accomplishment, he noted, given that "to have the college recognizing value in any type of expression other than Academic is really something."<sup>31</sup> In a second-year composition class, students worked "purely on expressive + and creative ideas—with music, with any medium they desire, and all emphasis on space, motion, etc."<sup>32</sup> Subsequent administrators and colleagues were often less receptive to his initiatives. If administrators were recalcitrant, however, the students were not. Many of them described the pleasure of working with Macdonald not only in class but informally at the college and in off-campus classes and discussions.

Macdonald was an inspirational teacher who supported his students and their work. He introduced Alexandra Luke (1901–1967) to automatic painting at the Banff School of Fine Arts, where he urged students to create from within, with



Jock Macdonald and students at the Banff School of Fine Arts, 1951, photographer unknown.



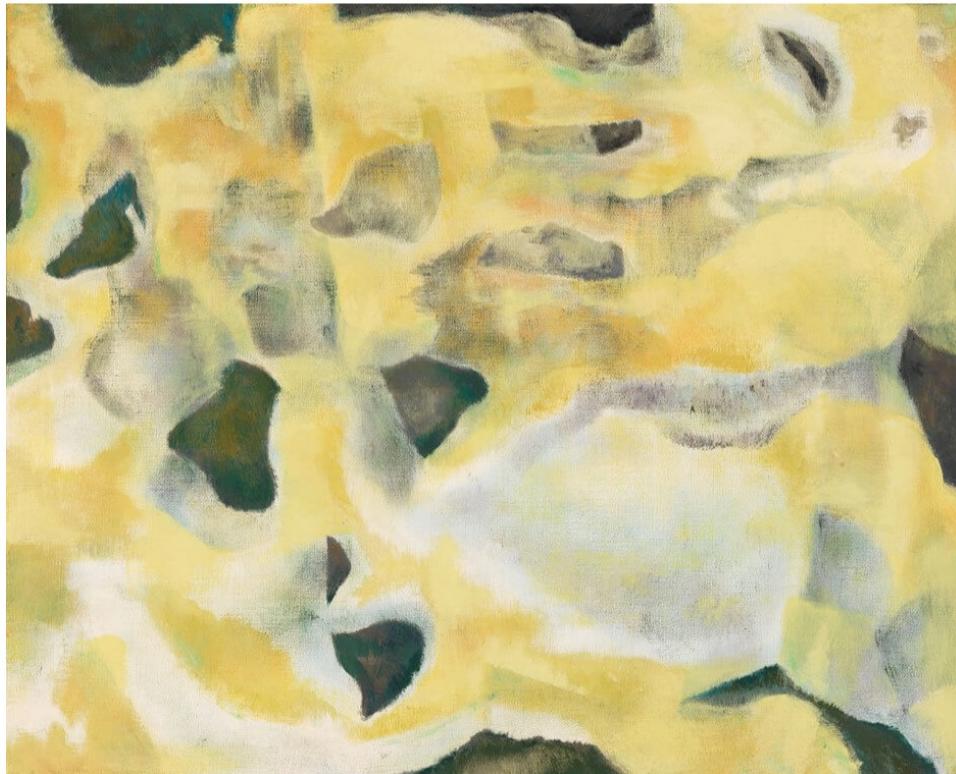
Alexandra Luke, *Circus*, 1948, watercolour, ink on paper, 32.8 x 38.4 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

no relation to natural forms. Calgary artist Marion Nicoll (1909–1985) attributed her success as an abstract artist to the influence of Macdonald's instruction in automatic painting. Thelma Van Alstyne (1913–2008), who studied with Macdonald at the Doon School, described him as a philosopher and mentor, a "superior teacher," and the "'father' of non-objective art in Canada."<sup>33</sup> William Ronald (1926–1998), later a colleague in Painters Eleven, recalled that the most stimulating parts of Macdonald's classes were the discussions—of *Search for the Real and Other Essays* (1948) by the German-American abstract expressionist Hans Hofmann (1880–1966), for example, or of *Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought, A Key to the Enigmas of the World* (1922) by the Russian mathematician P.D. Ouspensky (1878–1947). He cited Macdonald as the most important influence in his career: "Jock believed in 'encouraged,' and 'encouraged' was often all one had to live on."<sup>34</sup>

Macdonald went far beyond being an inspiring and challenging teacher: he became a spokesperson for those students whose work he believed in. He purchased their work, traded his own paintings with them, and lent them money, despite his own precarious financial situation.<sup>35</sup> He wrote: "Apart from my own efforts in the field of art, my greatest happiness is in the odd favorable opportunities I have to fight for the worthiness I sense in the work of our younger artists."<sup>36</sup>

Above all, Macdonald supported his students, no matter what path they took. As he wrote to Frank Palmer (1921–1990): "All I want you to do is to keep going ... to ignore the remarks that you might hear ... and 'dig that furrow' in your particular field ... true to your inner being, your inner awareness. Your inner depth will flower, it cannot help but do so."<sup>37</sup>

Macdonald's approach to children's art classes, which he taught in both Vancouver and Toronto, was interdisciplinary in nature. In 1943, charged with establishing a children's art program at the Vancouver Art Gallery, he wrote: "We will hold the classes for twenty weeks + I hope to make them ... memorable.... We will ... enrich our Saturday morning classes with some symphony music.... I believe a little good music vibrating through the gallery rooms is an added enrichment to the desired atmosphere for art instruction + it does bring at least a suggestion to some children of the unity of the arts. I look forward to the Saturday morning classes with uplifting spirit."<sup>38</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Memory of Music*, 1959, oil on canvas board, 81 x 100 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery.



# STYLE & TECHNIQUE

From a background in design, Jock Macdonald turned to landscape painting soon after he arrived in Vancouver, and throughout his life he sought inspiration in nature. In the 1930s he embarked on a lifelong search for a personal abstract expression. His work developed through three distinct styles—the semi-abstract “modalities” of the 1930s, the automatic paintings of the 1940s, and the mature abstract paintings of the 1950s. These stylistic shifts, each one the result of a “breakthrough” experience and what Macdonald called “stepping stones,” occurred about ten years apart, precipitated by either a new source of inspiration or a new technique.

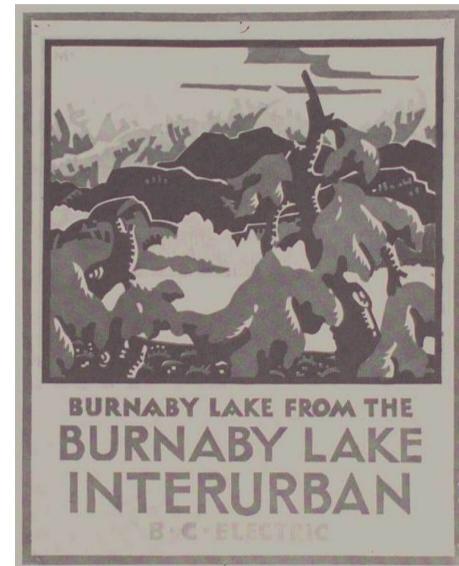


### DESIGN AND ILLUSTRATION

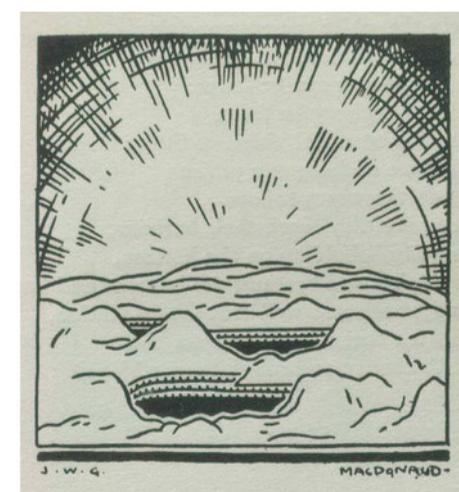
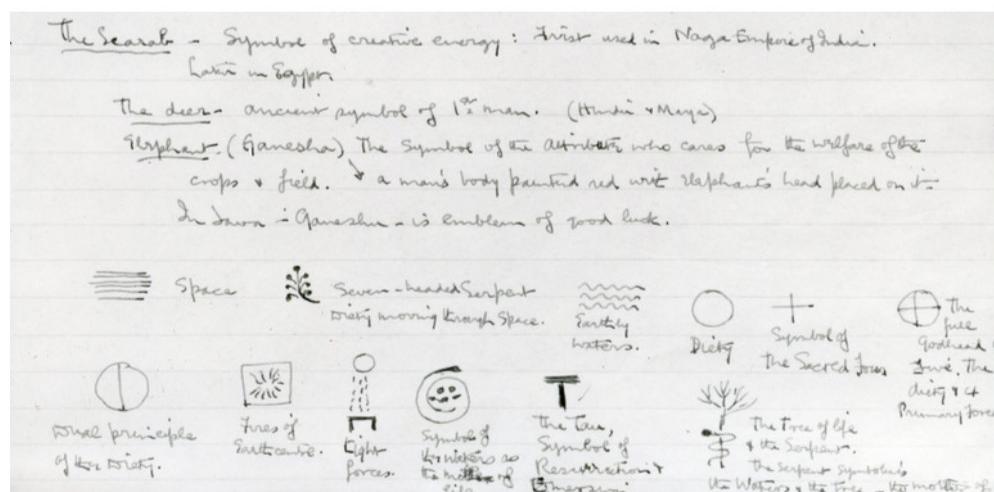
Macdonald's art was rooted in his design education at the Edinburgh College of Art in Scotland and his three-plus years working as a designer at Morton Sundour Fabrics in England. Throughout his career in Canada he taught design at art colleges in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto. Not surprisingly, core design principles dominated his early work as a successful illustrator, as in *Burnaby Lake*, c. 1929. When he transferred his artistic attention to landscape painting and abstraction and tried to loosen his paint handling and surface patterning, his training as a designer became a handicap he sought to escape.

The teaching notes Macdonald prepared for his courses in design reflect his belief in two fundamental ideas. First, the designer must appreciate certain core principles and symbols that are reflected in the history of all cultures. Understanding the evolution of those symbols and their iconography is critical to successful design. Second, "knowledge of form and drawing is the foundation stone of Design." A student, he believed, "must extract all there is to know about any one of God's creations and then put down his observations in his own way. This is the only way to create original design."<sup>1</sup>

In 1929 Macdonald entered a competition to design a poster for the B.C. Electric Company. The subject, Burnaby Lake, was one of his first B.C. landscape images. Macdonald's skill as a designer is clearly evident in this poster. The flat, stylized, and decorative design suggests the influence of his teacher Charles Paine, the head of applied arts at the Edinburgh College of Art, who in the 1920s created posters for the London Underground Group. Exquisitely designed, the image is Art Deco in style: the foreground branches are set against snow-capped mountains and an abstracted pattern in the sky. Though an attractive and successful poster, it has none of the elemental power that characterizes Macdonald's later landscape paintings.<sup>2</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Burnaby Lake*, c. 1929, poster for the B.C. Electric Railway.



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, excerpt from "Symbolism in Decoration," a page in Macdonald's notes, c. 1930, collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer. RIHGT: Jock Macdonald, *I Know a White Kingdom*, 1931, linocut, 6.2 x 6.2 cm, illustration for *The Neighing North*, by Annie Charlotte Dalton, 1931. In Dalton, Macdonald found a kindred spirit who shared his love of the land. Though his linocut illustrations are small, they impart an incontestable power.

## Landscape Painting

Macdonald became close friends with Fred Varley (1881–1969) soon after they arrived to teach at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (now the Emily Carr University of Art + Design) in 1926. They often went on painting expeditions together to the Fraser Canyon, Garibaldi Park, the Rocky Mountains, and the Gulf Islands. Varley became Macdonald's mentor and influenced his early evolution as a painter of the Canadian landscape.

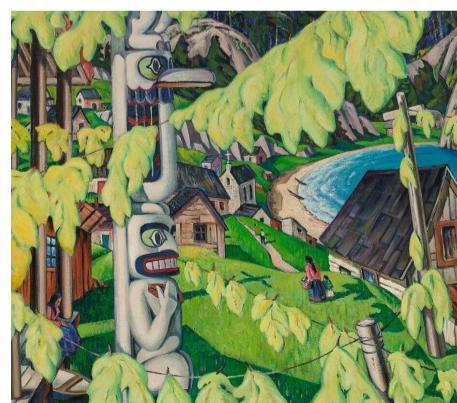
As a youth in Thurso, Scotland, Macdonald had done *plein-air* sketches, primarily in watercolour. Varley persuaded him to experiment in oil to better capture the powers of the landscape and advised him to "stop drawing and start painting."<sup>3</sup> Macdonald later wrote: "The line and decorative forms were also forcing themselves too much ... I can see what my wife and Varley meant when they said I was producing coloured drawings."<sup>4</sup> Macdonald gradually gained confidence: when he completed *Lytton Church, B.C.*, 1930, he did not show it to Varley for his approval.

Macdonald's magnificent mountain image *The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park, B.C.*, painted two years later, would be successful both nationally and internationally. In 1934 Macdonald returned to Garibaldi Park to paint the The Black Tusk again, this time in a much more ethereal manner. For Macdonald, like Varley, the challenge was to paint work that spoke to the unique character and spiritual power of the B.C. landscape.

During his sojourn at Nootka from 1935 to 1936, Macdonald experienced first-hand the power of nature in his expeditions on land and his regular—and often difficult—navigation of the sea. Most of the works he completed there were oil-on-board paintings, many of which he sent back to Vancouver for sale. He completed only one major painting—*Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound, B.C.*, 1935—a dramatic representation of the First Nations (Mowachaht) village at Yuquot. In this work, Macdonald, like Emily Carr (1871–1945), sought to convey the power of the totem pole, contrasting it to the tiny church in the far distance. When he returned to Vancouver, Macdonald worked several of these subjects up into strong paintings such as *Indian Burial, Nootka*, 1937, and *Drying Herring Roe*, 1938, in which he portrayed the spirit of Nootka and its life.



Jock Macdonald, *Yale Valley, B.C.*, c. 1932, oil on canvas, 77 x 86.5 cm, courtesy of John A. Libby Fine Art.



Jock Macdonald, *Drying Herring Roe*, 1938, oil on canvas, 71.1 x 81.3 cm, private collection.



Macdonald's stylistic approach would evolve, but landscape and direct contact with nature remained a constant source of inspiration. His friend Nan Cheney (1897-1985) wrote: "[Jock] is planning to go to Garibaldi in Aug.... This country has barely been touched & Macdonald is keen to go north or to the West coast of the island again—for two years—his health is much improved and if he could only get someone to finance him to the extent of \$60.00 to \$75.00 a month he would be off at once."<sup>5</sup>

In the early 1940s, after Lawren Harris (1885-1970) settled in Vancouver, he and Macdonald went on painting excursions

together, most often in the Rocky Mountains. Macdonald found drama and spiritual power in the glaciers and the mountain spires. He called the Okanagan Valley "the real 'Van Gogh' country, with its strong lights, sage brush, sunbaked hillsides and brilliant colours."<sup>6</sup> Even after he left Vancouver in 1946 for Calgary, Macdonald would return during the summers, painting in the interior of British Columbia.

By then, however, Macdonald had essentially changed direction: "I am fairly certain that I won't do any more landscape canvases," he wrote. "Sketches yes, but to do a landscape canvas seems a waste of time + too much manufacturing."<sup>7</sup> The search for a personal abstract expression had become his principal focus.

#### EXPLORING ABSTRACTION

Macdonald was familiar with European modernism from his student days, when he frequented the London galleries and found inspiration in the work, among others, of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). From the time of his arrival in Vancouver, he attended discussions at the Vanderpant Galleries about contemporary artistic, mathematical, and scientific theories. The attendees had read *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912) by Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) and were inspired by the ideas of Canadian artists Bertram Brooker (1888-1955) and Lawren Harris (1885-1970), among others.<sup>8</sup> At the British Columbia College of Arts, theosophy, anthroposophy, and the interrelationship of the arts underpinned the curriculum.



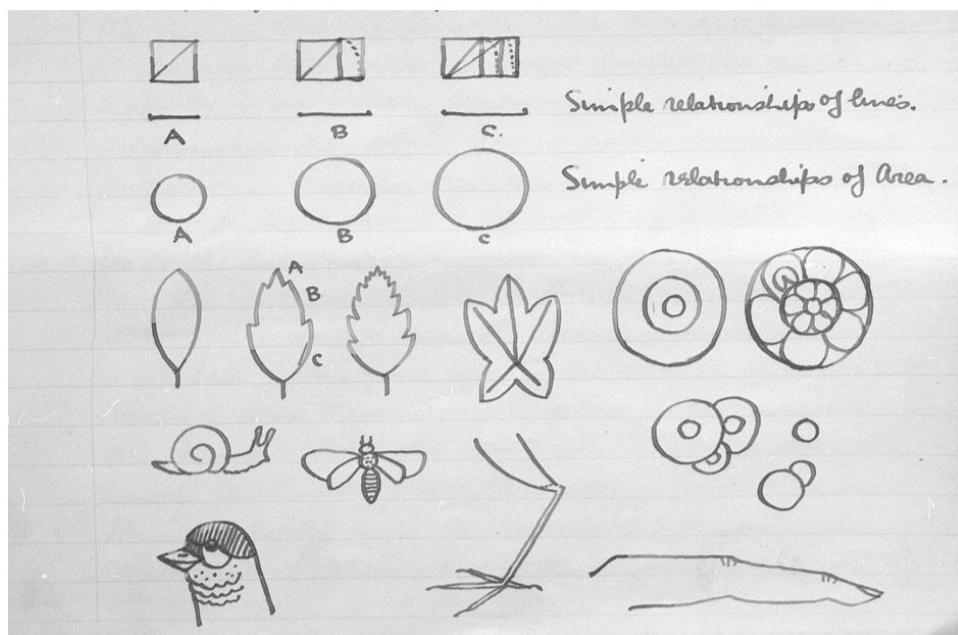
Jock Macdonald, *Thunder Clouds Over Okanagan Lake*, 1944-45, oil on canvas  
71.3 x 86.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

In 1934 Macdonald painted the abstract *Formative Colour Activity*—a breakthrough work in British Columbia at the time. The close-up view was most certainly inspired by the photographic experiments of John Vanderpant (1884–1939).<sup>9</sup> Macdonald's personal notebooks and teaching notes and his 1940 lecture "Art in Relation to Nature" reveal that his exploration of abstraction resulted from a deep commitment to a personal artistic expression that embodied "the force ... to which the whole universe conforms."<sup>10</sup> His objective was to "express the consciousness of the time in which [the artist] lives." As he wrote, "To be creative, truly creative, one ... must speak in the idioms of the time in which one lives."<sup>11</sup>

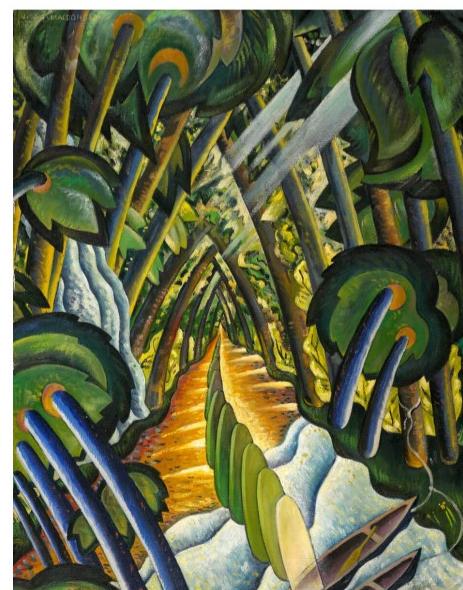
In the fall of 1936, just before leaving Nootka to return to Vancouver, Macdonald recorded a "breakthrough" in his painting—the result was a dramatic return to abstraction. His diary notes describe the creative process through which he painted both *Departing Day*, 1936, and *Etheric Form*, 1936. On October 5 he wrote: "I discover at last a new expression for painting—made four pencil notes for sketches + feel quite excited." The next day, he painted "the first subject.... Only the abstract forms are used but they are intermixed in a bold mass. Purest colours are used + give a brilliant value."<sup>12</sup>

On October 24 Macdonald recorded three more experimental sketches that he said were "memories of dreams."<sup>13</sup> *Pilgrimage*, 1937, painted after his return to Vancouver, may have been one of these dream images. In this work, two Nuu-chah-nulth canoes in the foreground provide a link to the lived experience of Northwest Coast Indigenous cultures, but the rest of the painting represents an abstracted dream landscape. The scene is penetrated by descending rays of light as the trees arch to create a natural sanctuary with a central pathway.

Over the next decade, while he continued to paint representational works, Macdonald became increasingly preoccupied with what he called his "modalities" or "thought idioms in nature." He likely discovered the term modalities in *The Foundations of Modern Art* (1931) by Amédée Ozenfant (1866–1966), though he expanded his definition ("typical forms of feeling and thinking") to include the theories of time and space as described by P.D. Ouspensky (1878–1947) in *Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought, A Key to the Enigmas of the World* (1922).



Detail of "Art in Relation to Nature," notes for a lecture first delivered by Jock Macdonald in February 1940, collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.



Jock Macdonald, *Pilgrimage*, 1937, oil on canvas, 78.6 x 61.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



When Lawren Harris returned to Vancouver in 1940, he found a kindred spirit in Macdonald, and he encouraged and championed Macdonald's abstract work. Though Macdonald, in later years, would sometime refer to his art as "non-objective," it was Harris's definition—"painting abstracted from nature"—that best described Macdonald's guiding principles in the creation of his modalities. Harris wrote in *Abstract Painting: A Disquisition* (1954) that this type of art is based on an idea and that "the meaning dictates the forms, colours, aesthetic structure and all the relationships in the painting, the purpose being to embody the idea as a living experience in a vital plastic creation."<sup>14</sup>

#### AUTOMATIC PAINTING

Macdonald was introduced to automatic painting in April 1944 by the British Surrealist artist and psychiatrist Grace Pailthorpe (1883–1971) and her colleague, artist-poet Reuben Mednikoff (1906–1972). In the fall of 1945 he became their pupil and under their supervision worked intensely on a series of exercises for three months. Examples in the Pailthorpe archives show that Macdonald completed at least twelve automatic images on his first day of study and fourteen on his second.<sup>15</sup> Each was meticulously dated and timed. Some have notations by Pailthorpe or by Mednikoff, commenting on technique and offering examples of how he might, for example, loosen his style, find the hidden meaning in the works, or extrapolate imagery such as birds or fish suggested by those abstract marks.

Beginning with monochromatic ink washes and pencil drawings and eventually moving on to colour pencil, watercolour, and combinations of media, Macdonald progressed from single concentrated images to fully developed and elaborate watercolours—often on wet paper to increase the fluidity of the painting. Many of these exercises are circular in composition, drawing the viewer into the image. Pailthorpe attributed their success to this mandala framing device.

Pailthorpe believed that through free association, when the mind is not interfering with what the hand is creating, artists could gain access to the subconscious and its reservoir of archetypal images, and that art should be capable of expressing the universal human condition. To be successful, however, art had also to embody aesthetic values including rhythm, balance, form, and pattern. Without these qualities, she said, there would be little pleasure in such creations.<sup>16</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Untitled [10.20 p.m., September 16, 1945]*, 1945, ink on paper, 22.8 x 30.4 cm, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 1]*, 1945, watercolour, ink on paper, 22.3 x 30.4 cm, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. CENTRE: Jock Macdonald, *Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 2]*, 1945, watercolour, ink on paper, 22.3 x 30.3 cm, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 3]*, 1945, watercolour, ink on paper, 22.8 x 30.4 cm, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. These three automatics, created in one day, illustrate an evolution from the anecdotal embellishment of the first work to a more open and painterly exploration of the automatic watercolour technique (though in the second iteration, Macdonald could not resist the suggestion of a crouching animal and a tipsy figure on the right). Macdonald notes, on the first of these paintings, that after he completed it, there was a discussion about the process.

Macdonald, like the Abstract Expressionists Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), Adolph Gottlieb (1903–1974), and Arshile Gorky (1904–1948) in New York, welcomed automatism as a way to find inspiration in the subconscious. Late in his career Macdonald wrote: "Automatic art, for me, is a reflection of one's experiences in life as all that one has observed is retained in the deeper inner mind, and in Automatic art one is painting imaginatively one's impressions of nature."<sup>17</sup>

Macdonald continued practising automatic painting for the next ten years, introducing it to his students and incorporating it into his teaching as well. Describing the impact of Macdonald's teaching, Calgary artist Marion Nicoll (1909–1985) recalled:

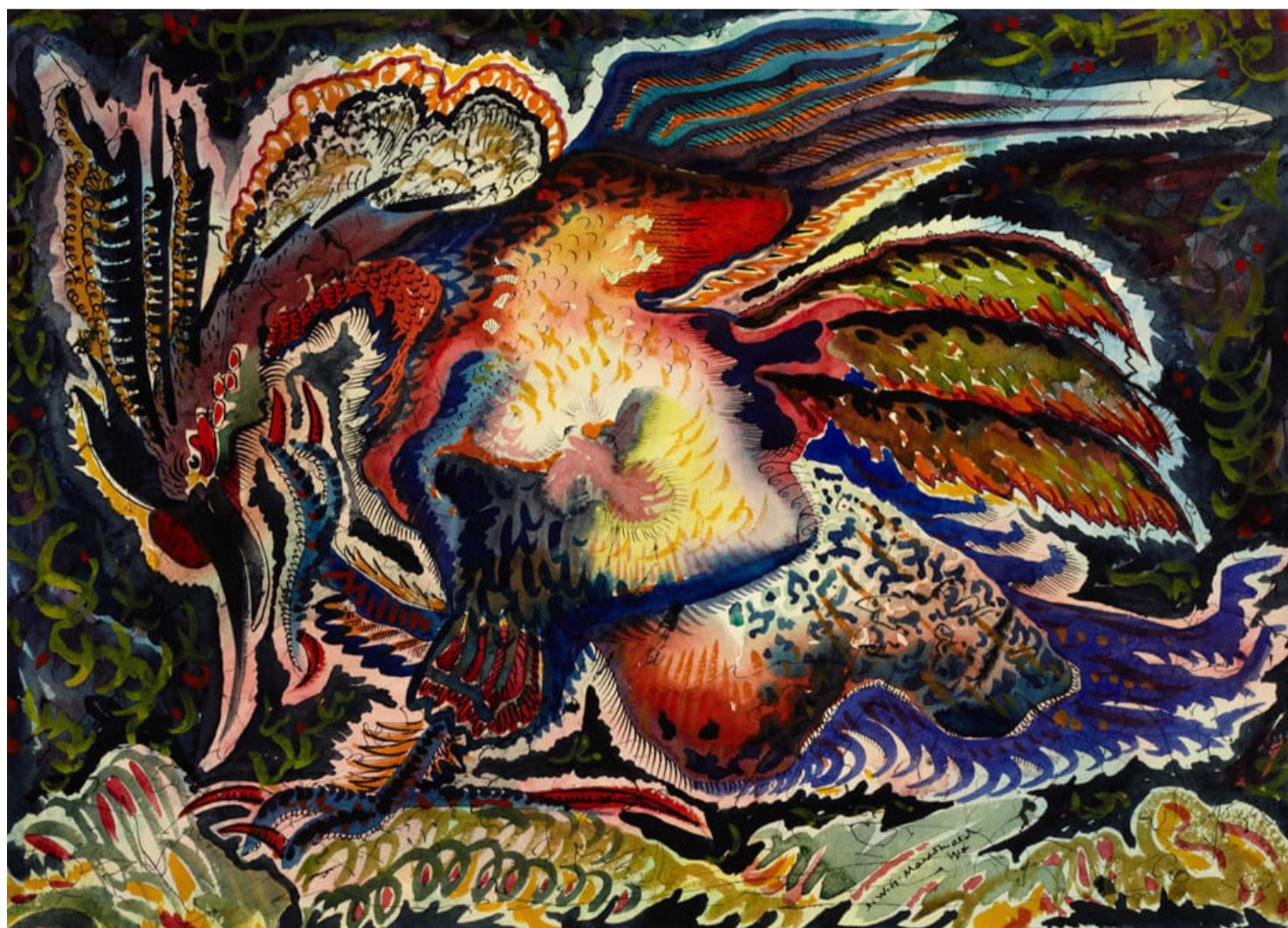
He really roused things up. In Jungian theory you forget absolutely nothing ... sight ... sound ... it's all stored in your subconscious. It is stored there in its true form, not colored by personal bias of any kind. It is a source of Information; you put your hand down, you watch, and you wait. Look, look! there it goes! I've made things that would make your hair stand up—birds, forked tongues, and male and female mixtures. I don't think I ever would have been an abstract painter if I hadn't gone through 1946–57 with automatic drawing.<sup>18</sup>

For Macdonald, himself, automatic art became a crucial aspect of his artistic practice. He wrote to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff in 1948: "I am working every chance I can (four or five nights a week) on watercolours + black and white in our little kitchen."<sup>19</sup> Colin Graham, the director of the Arts Centre of Greater Victoria (now the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria), described the process: "Barbara would turn on the radio and Jock would just start fooling around with the watercolours ... I gather it was helped by Barbara who kept his conscious mind [away from the painting] so that the automatic process was really working and he would keep talking to Barbara and still dream."<sup>20</sup>



Marion Nicoll, *Untitled (Automatic)*, 1960, watercolour on paper, 35 x 22.7 cm, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton. This impressive automatic dated 1960 (fifteen years after Macdonald introduced her to automatic painting) offers evidence of the continuing impact of automatism on Nicoll's work.

In many of these paintings the tightness of the line drawings of animals, people, and imaginary creatures extrapolated from the abstract markings seems to contradict the openness of his painterly style. Macdonald the designer continued to struggle with the temptation to exaggerate the linear embellishments that interrupt the flow of the work. In *Orange Bird*, 1946, for example, the design and decorative, almost cartoonish elements dominate, but in the beautiful *Phoenix*, 1949, the image evolves from the paint itself in an entirely coherent and satisfying automatic painting.<sup>21</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Phoenix*, c. 1949, watercolour and ink on paper, 25.4 x 35.7 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

Macdonald's crucial challenge lay in translating the freedom, elegance, and spontaneity of these watercolour automatics to a large format in the more demanding and slower medium of oil. His first automatic oil, *Ocean Legend*, 1947, though well received, illustrates the problems he encountered, and the composition remains locked in a cubist-derived grid. He himself wrote, "Truthfully, I am not altogether satisfied with it—not enough depth in it + a bit too busy."<sup>22</sup>

In the summers of 1948 and 1949, Macdonald studied in Provincetown, Massachusetts, with Hans Hofmann (1880–1966). Both men believed that all art, even non-objective art, had to begin with nature. Hofmann, Macdonald wrote, "valued automatic expression as the essence of creative work."<sup>23</sup> In paintings such as *Black Evolving Forms*, 1953, Macdonald would be influenced by Hofmann's theoretical approach to abstraction—"his spiritually poised

concepts of plastic-space creative art [the 'push-pull' theory of the surface]."<sup>24</sup> Hofmann praised Macdonald's automatic work in watercolour, saying he should devote the rest of his days to painting.<sup>25</sup> Macdonald wrote: "After the direction I received from Hofmann I feel that my oils are weak efforts but something will happen before long."<sup>26</sup> It would be almost a decade, however, before Macdonald discovered the solution to his problem with oils.

### NON-OBJECTIVE PAINTING

In 1954 Macdonald became a senior member in the formation of Painters Eleven, the group of Toronto-based artists who banded together to exhibit and promote abstract art. A year after the group's formation, Macdonald observed: "The 'established artists' in Toronto ... would love to abolish us. This they cannot do as the inner spark in this group is amazingly united in purpose and holds a common faith in one another."<sup>27</sup> Encouraged by his colleagues' commitment to abstraction, the quality of their work, and their engagement with the most contemporary developments in art internationally, Macdonald continued to struggle to find a way to translate the fluidity of his watercolours into oil. With the support of Painters Eleven, Macdonald embarked on the last stage in his artistic evolution.

In the spring of 1955 during his sojourn in France, Macdonald met Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985), whose work he greatly admired. Dubuffet advised him to add turpentine and linseed oil to his paint and to use long, pliable brushes. "It is only a technique discovery you have to find," he said. "Everything else you have already."<sup>28</sup> Macdonald noted: "If I should find my way, then certainly Dubuffet will be given the credit for a change in my oils—I will see to that."<sup>29</sup>

In the summer of 1956, a year after his return from Europe, Macdonald was able to devote himself to painting once again. His colleagues introduced him to pyroxylin, an industrial gloss enamel paint marketed under the trade name Duco, which Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) had used for its fluid, quick-drying properties. Its odour was noxious, but Macdonald persevered in using it, despite having previously had lung problems. He had finally found a fluid medium that allowed him to work on a larger and more dramatic scale. Ray Mead (1921–1998) remembered Macdonald painting in rubber gloves, with his studio window flung wide open.<sup>30</sup>



Jean Dubuffet (centre) and friends in Vence, France, c. 1954–55, photograph by Jock Macdonald.

Though Macdonald used Duco for only eight months, it provided the liberation he had sought for so long. He wrote: "I have been exclusively experimenting in plastic [Duco] paints all summer.... The chief gain [over] straight oil techniques is the speed with which one must work and with the rapid drying. Also, of course, the fluid quality.... I find my work far freer—much less tight, more painterly and frankly, I think, more advanced. In winter I will not continue this medium as I could not stand the odour."<sup>31</sup>



LEFT: Jock Macdonald, *Obelisk*, 1956, pyroxylin lacquer and sand on canvas, 101.5 x 61.5 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. RIGHT: Jock Macdonald, *Desert Rim*, 1957, oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite, 119.7 x 134.6 cm, Museum London.

*Obelisk*, 1956, is one of those paintings in Duco. Perhaps to compensate for the flatness of the new medium, Macdonald mixed sand into the ground of this work. The painting's limited colour scheme contrasts dark and light, negative and positive elements, as the flattened shapes overlap and intersect. The central vertical image, by its sheer mass, dominates the composition, allowing Macdonald to achieve a carefully calculated monumentality. Macdonald would continue to paint in oils during this time, but the medium could not offer him the same flexibility as the plastic paint.

A year later, when Macdonald began to work in Lucite 44, he made his final breakthrough. This acrylic, fast-drying, and fluid paint finally permitted him to work on large canvases, such as *Desert Rim*, 1957, and to translate the brilliance of his watercolours to the oil medium. After three decades as a painter, Macdonald felt he was really "finding his stride." Combining Lucite with oil, his painting became "far freer, much less tight, more painterly and more advanced," he told Pailthorpe—qualities he had been searching for since he first began to paint. "Now that I have found my way—completely my own way—I am now painting continuously through my free moments from teaching."<sup>32</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Young Summer*, 1959, oil and Lucite 44 on canvas, 107.3 x 121.9 cm, private collection.

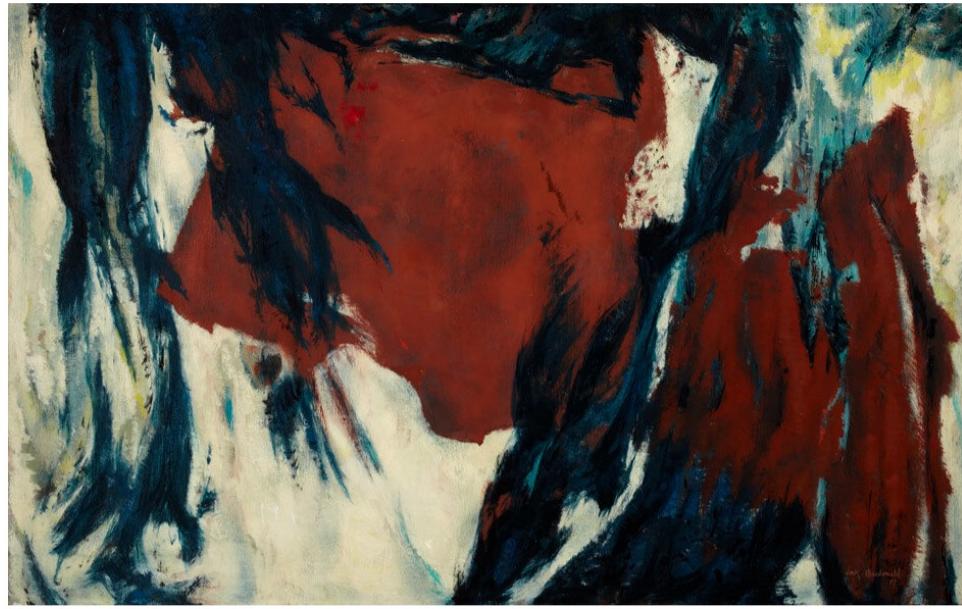
Macdonald was also buoyed by the encouragement he received from the American art critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994). In August Macdonald wrote to Maxwell Bates (1906-1980) that he found his work "altogether different from anything I have ever done and ... far superior.... Greenberg gave me such a boost in confidence that I cannot remember ever knowing such a sudden development taking place before. The only parallel was when I concentrated for 5 months producing automatic watercolours every day. This work is also

automatic-non-objective but not like anyone else's stuff."<sup>33</sup>

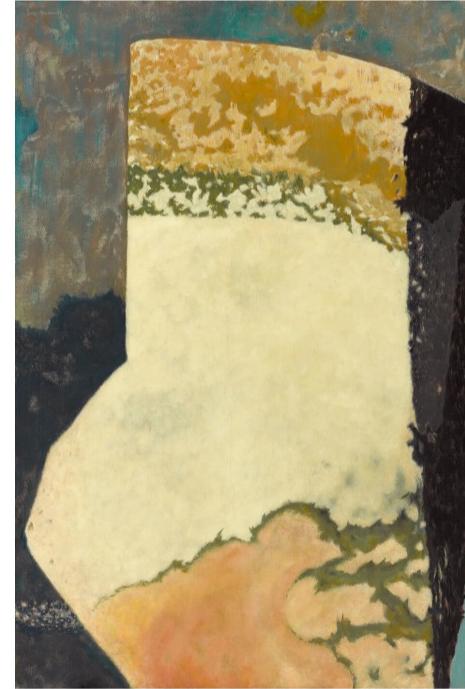
In the fall of 1959 Macdonald painted a series of magnificent yellow canvases. He described these works as "soft, delicate and airy." In *Young Summer*, 1959, the yellow ground shimmers and coalesces with the figures scattered across the surface in vibrant interrelationships. It is difficult not to think of the microscopic slides of acid drops that Macdonald projected for his students during these years—a "slide of acid drops that resembled butterfly wings and suggested beautiful imagery as subject matter for paintings."<sup>34</sup> Like the Nootka modalities, these works speak to the spiritual in nature—to its essential structure and character—and to the creation of a new form of art that represents its own time.

The apparent ease and fluidity of the canvases of his last years—such as *Airy Journey*, *Flood Tide*, and *Iridescent Monarch*, all 1957; *Contemplation* and *Legend of the Orient*, 1958; *Heroic Mould*, *Fleeting Breath*, and *Fugitive Articulation*, all 1959; and *Nature Evolving*, *All Things Prevail*, *Far Off Drums*, and *Growing Serenity*, all 1960—is breathtaking. Macdonald wrote to his former student and friend Thelma Van Alstyne (1913-2008): "Non-Objective masterpieces are created intuitively—are alive with spiritual rhythm and organic with cosmic order which rules the universe."<sup>35</sup> Recognized for their brilliance by Canadian and American critics alike, the paintings are unique in the history of mid-century abstraction.

Bates summed up Macdonald's career best: "The explorer of ideas, when a painter, cannot accept a safe career by early finding a suitable style. Instead he makes his way beyond the region mapped and appreciated by the art-interested public. The explorers are not only the most creative artists, they contribute most to the art. Their trials and tribulations come early; success often comes late. Jock Macdonald is such an explorer of visual ideas."<sup>36</sup>



Jock Macdonald, *Flood Tide*, 1957, oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite, 76 x 121.9 cm, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.



Jock Macdonald, *Heroic Mould*, 1959, oil and Lucite 44 on canvas, 183 x 121.8 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



The works of Jock Macdonald are held in collections across Canada. The Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Vancouver Art Gallery have sizable collections of Macdonald's paintings and have each hosted retrospective exhibitions of his works. A number of Macdonald's works are also held by The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, home to a significant collection of art by members of the Painters Eleven. Although the following institutions hold the works listed below, the works may not always be on view.



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## AGNES ETHERINGTON ART CENTRE

Queen's University  
36 University Avenue  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
613-533-2190  
[agnes.queensu.ca](http://agnes.queensu.ca)



**Jock Macdonald, *Scent of a Summer Garden*, 1952**

Watercolour and coloured inks  
on paper  
35.6 x 45.7 cm

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## ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA

1040 Moss Street  
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada  
250-384-4171  
[aggv.ca](http://aggv.ca)



**Jock Macdonald, *The Argument*, 1952**  
Watercolour and ink on paper  
24.8 x 35.5 cm



**Jock Macdonald, *Contemplation*, 1958**  
Oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite  
68.5 x 122 cm



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### ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON

123 King Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
905-527-6610  
[artgalleryofhamilton.com](http://artgalleryofhamilton.com)



**Jock Macdonald, *Departing Day*, 1939**  
Oil on canvas  
71.5 x 56.1 cm



**Jock Macdonald, *Iridescent Monarch*, 1957**  
Oil, acrylic, resin, and Lucite 44  
on Masonite  
106.7 x 121.9 cm

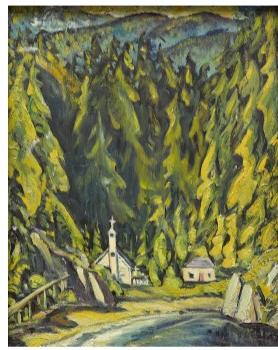
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### ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

317 Dundas Street West  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
1-877-225-4246 or 416-979-6648  
[ago.net](http://ago.net)



**Jock Macdonald, *In the White Forest*, 1932**  
Oil on canvas  
66 x 76.2 cm



**Jock Macdonald, *Indian Church, Friendly Cove (recto of Departing Day)*, 1935**  
Oil on wood panel  
37.9 x 30.5 cm



**Jock Macdonald, *Departing Day (verso of Indian Church, Friendly Cove)*, 1936 (dated 1935)**  
Oil on wood panel  
37.9 x 30.5 cm



**Jock Macdonald, *Winter*, 1938**  
Oil on canvas  
56 x 45.9 cm



# JOCK MACDONALD

Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



Jock Macdonald,  
*Russian Fantasy*, 1946  
Watercolour and ink on  
paper  
21.7 x 35.7 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Untitled (Automatic)*,  
1948  
Oil on canvas  
69.8 x 83.8 cm



Jock Macdonald, *Fabric  
of Dreams*, 1952  
Watercolour on paper  
37 x 46.9 cm



Jock Macdonald, *From  
a Riviera Window*,  
1955  
Watercolour on paper  
42.8 x 32.6 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Twilight Forms*, 1955  
Oil on canvas  
79.8 x 99.5 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Slumber Deep*, 1957  
Oil and Lucite 44 on  
canvas  
121.9 x 135.3 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Fleeting Breath*, 1959  
Oil and Lucite 44 on  
canvas  
122.2 x 149.2 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Heroic Mould*, 1959  
Oil and Lucite 44 on  
canvas  
183 x 121.8 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Nature Evolving*, 1960  
Oil and Lucite 44 on  
canvas  
111.8 x 137.2 cm



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## ART GALLERY OF YORK UNIVERSITY

Accolade East Building, York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
416-736-5169  
[yorku.ca/agyu](http://yorku.ca/agyu)



**Jock Macdonald, *Growing Serenity*, 1960**  
Oil and Lucite 44 on canvas  
91.5 x 106.8 cm

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## GLENBOW MUSEUM

130 - 9 Avenue S.E.  
Calgary, Alberta  
Canada  
T2G 0P3  
[glenbow.org](http://glenbow.org)



**Jock Macdonald, *White Bark*, 1954**  
Oil on hard board  
102.2 x 81.3 cm

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## JUSTINA M. BARNICKE GALLERY AT HART HOUSE

Art Museum at the University of Toronto  
7 Hart House Circle  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
416-978-8398  
[artmuseum.utoronto.ca](http://artmuseum.utoronto.ca)



**Jock Macdonald, *Airy Journey*,  
1957**  
Oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite  
112.5 x 127.5 cm

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## MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

3475 Albert Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada  
306-584-4250  
[mackenzieartgallery.ca](http://mackenzieartgallery.ca)



**Jock Macdonald, *Fugitive  
Articulation*, 1959**  
Oil on canvas  
107 x 121.9 cm

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## MCMICHAEL CANADIAN ART COLLECTION

10365 Islington Avenue  
Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada  
905-893-1121 or 1-888-213-1121  
[mcmichael.com](http://mcmichael.com)



Jock Macdonald,  
*Chrysanthemum*, 1938  
Oil on canvas  
55 x 45.6 cm

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## MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

1380 Sherbrooke Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
1-800-899-6873 or 514-285-2000  
[mbam.qc.ca/en](http://mbam.qc.ca/en)



Jock Macdonald, *The Wave*,  
1939  
Oil and sand on canvas  
102.2 x 82 cm

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## MUSEUM LONDON

421 Ridout Street North  
London, Ontario, Canada  
519-661-0333  
[museumlondon.ca](http://museumlondon.ca)



**Jock Macdonald, *Desert Rim*,  
1957**  
Oil and Lucite 44 on Masonite  
119.7 x 134.6 cm

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## NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA

380 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
1-800-319-2787 or 613-990-1985  
[gallery.ca](http://gallery.ca)



**Jock Macdonald, *Lytton  
Church, B.C.*, 1930**  
Oil on canvas  
61.2 x 71.5 cm



**Jock Macdonald,  
*Flower Study*, 1934**  
Oil on fibreboard  
45.7 x 38.1 cm



**Jock Macdonald,  
*Formative Colour  
Activity*, 1934**  
Oil on canvas  
77 x 66.4 cm



**Jock Macdonald,  
*Pilgrimage*, 1937**  
Oil on canvas  
78.6 x 61.2 cm



# JOCK MACDONALD

Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



**Jock Macdonald, Rain,**  
**1938**

Oil on canvas  
56.2 x 46.2 cm



**Jock Macdonald,**  
***Thunder Clouds Over***  
**Okanagan Lake, 1944-**  
**45**

Oil on canvas  
71.3 x 86.4 cm



**Jock Macdonald, Batik,**  
**1951**

Aniline dye on cotton  
95.5 x 96.5 cm



**Jock Macdonald,**  
***Obelisk*, 1956**

Pyroxylin lacquer and  
sand on canvas  
101.5 x 61.5 cm



**Jock Macdonald, All**  
***Things Prevail*, 1960**

Lucite 44 on canvas  
106.7 x 122.1 cm



**Jock Macdonald, Far**  
***Off Drums*, 1960**

Oil and Lucite 44 on  
canvas  
91.3 x 106.6 cm

## THE ROBERT MCLAUGHLIN GALLERY

72 Queen Street  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada  
905-576-3000  
rmg.on.ca



**Jock Macdonald,**  
***Orange Bird*, 1946**  
Watercolour on paper,  
laid down  
18.5 x 26.4 cm



**Jock Macdonald,**  
***Phoenix*, c. 1949**  
Watercolour and ink on  
paper  
25.4 x 35.7 cm



**Jock Macdonald, Flood**  
***Tide*, 1957**  
Oil and Lucite 44 on  
Masonite  
76 x 121.9 cm



**Jock Macdonald, Rust**  
***of Antiquity*, 1958**  
Oil and Lucite 44 on  
Masonite  
106.5 x 121.4 cm



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## ROYAL BC MUSEUM

675 Belleville Street  
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada  
250-356-7226  
[royalbcmuseum.bc.ca](http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca)



Jock Macdonald, *The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park, 1934*  
Oil on board  
28.9 x 36.5 cm

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## SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

75 Belford Road  
Edinburgh, United Kingdom  
+44 (0)131 624 6200  
[nationalgalleries.org](http://nationalgalleries.org)



Jock Macdonald,  
*Untitled [10.20 p.m., September 16, 1945], 1945*  
Ink on paper  
22.8 x 30.4 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 1], 1945*  
Watercolour and ink on paper  
22.3 x 30.4 cm



Jock Macdonald,  
*Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 2], 1945*  
Watercolour and ink on paper  
22.3 x 30.3 cm

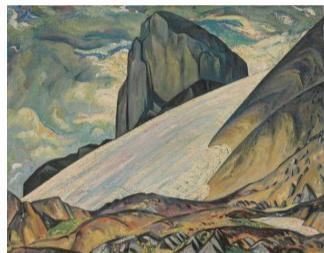


Jock Macdonald,  
*Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 3], 1945*  
Watercolour and ink on paper  
22.8 x 30.4 cm



### VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

750 Hornby Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada  
604-662-4719  
[vanartgallery.bc.ca](http://vanartgallery.bc.ca)



Jock Macdonald, *The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park, B.C., 1932*  
Oil on canvas  
71 x 90.8 cm



Jock Macdonald, *Graveyard of the Pacific, 1935*  
Oil on board  
31 x 38.5 cm



Jock Macdonald, *Indian Burial at Nootka, 1935*  
Ink on paper with pencil grid laid over top  
7.4 x 4 cm



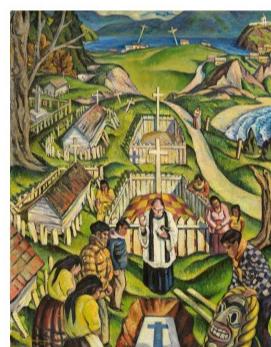
Jock Macdonald, *Etheric Form, 1936 (dated 1934)*  
Oil on panel  
38.1 x 30.5 cm



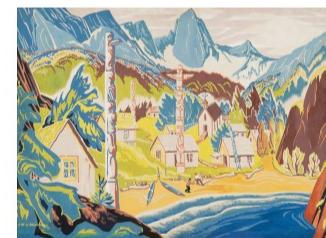
Jock Macdonald, *Nootka Lighthouse, Nootka, B.C., 1936*  
Watercolour on paper  
25 x 25.5 cm



Jock Macdonald, *Fall (Modality 16), 1937*  
Oil on canvas  
71.1 x 61 cm



Jock Macdonald, *Indian Burial, Nootka, 1937*  
Oil on canvas  
91.9 x 71.8 cm



Jock Macdonald, *Indian Village, 1943*  
Gouache on paper  
76.3 x 101.5 cm



Jock Macdonald, *Memory of Music, 1959*  
Oil on canvas board  
81 x 100 cm

## NOTES

### BIOGRAPHY

1. Several paintings of London's historic sites by one of Macdonald's uncles, W. Alister MacDonald, hang in Guildhall, London. See Edwin Beresford Chancellor, *London Recalled. Being a Topographical Description of the Collection of Water-Colour Drawings by W. Alister MacDonald in the Guildhall Art Gallery* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1937).
2. I.V. Macdonald, interview with Joyce Zemans, June 3, 1979.
3. See Joyce Zemans, *Jock Macdonald* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1985); and Ian M. Thom, "Jock Macdonald: A Biographical Sketch," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 9-14.
4. J.W.G. Macdonald, "Factory Experience," *The Paint Box* (Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Art, 1928), 43.
5. The partnership dissolved within a year and, subsequently, Vanderpant ran the gallery himself. Artists, musicians, and their supporters met at the Vanderpant musicales every week to listen to the photographer's extensive collection of records and to lectures on contemporary Canadian and international art as well as current scientific, philosophical, and aesthetic theories. A principal topic of discussion was the spiritual essence of art and the artist's search for the "universal centre." Vanderpant wrote: "The infinite qualities of art cannot be explained by starting on a material base but matter may be dematerialized by accepting infinite axioms." *The Paint Box* (Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Art, 1928), 55. For more information on John Vanderpant, see Charles Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975), 213; Sheryl Salloum, "John Vanderpant and the Cultural Life of Vancouver (1920-39)," in *B.C. Studies*, no. 97 (Spring 1993): 38-50; and Charles C. Hill, *John Vanderpant Photographs* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976).
6. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis, *Rabindranath Tagore's Visit to Canada* (1929; repr., New York: Haskell House, 1977).
7. Jack Shadbolt, interview with Joyce Zemans, February 21, 1978.
8. British Columbia College of Arts Limited, *Illustrated Prospectus, 1934-35*.
9. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, December 29, 1936, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives.

10. Macdonald always referred to the village of Yuquot, situated in Friendly Cove, as Nootka and to Nootka Island and the general vicinity as Nootka as well. For many years the Nuu-chah-nulth tribes were referred to collectively as the "Nootka"; however, as the excellent history *Nuu-chach-nulth Voices, Histories, Objects and Journeys*, ed. Alan L. Hoover (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2000), points out, this name, first applied by Captain Cook in 1778, is incorrect. In 1980 the Tribal Council adopted the name "Nuu-chah-nulth," meaning "all along the shining mountains." (39) The seventeen tribes of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations stretch along approximately 300 kilometres of the Pacific coast of Vancouver Island. The people of Nootka Sound are members of the Mowachaht-Muchalaht First Nations, two of the seventeen tribes of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations, and Yuquot is the centre of the Mowachaht world. (11)

11. Macdonald's Nootka diary was discovered recently and is published in full in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 133-61.

12. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, June 24, 1935, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 138.

13. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, July 17, 1935, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014): "After supper Harry dictated to B + myself his lecture on colour abstracted from the spiritual teachings of Rudolf Steiner. We commenced with the examples of colour values used in classical art." (144) On September 17 they "enjoyed on the radio, 'Madam Butterfly' + Lizst." (150) On September 15 he recorded that they had discussed T.E. Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert* (1927), particularly his descriptions of the brilliant sunlight of the desert while they were surrounded by "nature's lowest or nearly lowest cloud in British Columbia." (149)

14. Macdonald's Nootka diary (December 31st, 1935) in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 151-52. "We have gone through many hard experiences since [September 30th when I recorded] that we had \$2's left to provide food for the winter. Gradually our table exhibited less and less—the good kind people at the lighthouse helped me out with some provisions, even though we could not pay for them. I took as little as possible, but by the beginning of December we owed them twenty dollars."

15. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, January 4, 1936, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 152. To emphasize the drama and power of the scene, he noted that the rock in the painting was eighty feet tall. Recalled by Gerald Tyler, interview with Joyce Zemans, February 28, 1978. In the words of the Mowachaht-Muchalaht First Nations, the people of Nootka Sound, describing the weather conditions in the vicinity of Yuquot: "During the winter when the powerful winds sweep unhindered from the southwest across the open ocean, we wonder why some of the rocks on the beach don't blow away." See "Yuquot Agenda Paper, Mowachaht-Muchalaht First Nations," foreword by Richard Inglis, James C. Haggarty, and Kevin Neary, in *Nuu-Chah-Nulth Voices, Histories, Objects and Journeys*, ed. Alan L. Hoover (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 2000), 16.

16. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, October 3, 1936, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 157.

17. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, October 6, 1936, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 157.

18. For a discussion of Macdonald's art before 1945, see Ian M. Thom, "The Early Work: An Artist Emerges," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 15-38.

19. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, October 24, 1936, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 158.

20. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, August 12, 1937, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

21. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, April 5, 1946, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 165.

22. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry June 16, 1938, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. In 1941 the work was sold to IBM for its new collection, and Macdonald felt "very honoured with their interest." Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, June 8, 1941, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

23. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, January 2, 1957, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.



24. Macdonald to John Varley, September 9, 1939, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal. While Macdonald praised the European artists, writing, "There is not the slightest doubt that the continental artists of this century set standards that this Dominion hasn't arrived at yet, except in one or two instances," he also wrote to Nan Cheney (1897-1985), July 20, 1939, from Ojai, California, that in his opinion, "Fred Varley's *Gipsy* of the Vancouver Art Gallery is more powerful than the portrait work of Augustus John seen at San Francisco. I also feel even more keenly that British Columbia will give—through the few at first—art of a higher plane than what has previously come out of Canada. For myself, this exhibition is the greatest stimulant and also the greatest sobering medicine I could have—altogether a tonic of unknown value." McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

25. Macdonald to John Varley, September 9, 1939, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

26. Joyce Zemans, "Envisioning Nation: Nationhood, Identity and the Sampson-Matthews Silkscreen Project: The Wartime Prints," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 19, no. 1 (1998): 6-51. See also Ian Sigvaldason and Scott Steedman, *Art for War and Peace: How a Great Public Art Project Helped Canada Discover Itself* (Vancouver: Read Leaf, 2015).

27. Ian Thom, "The Early Work: An Artist Emerges," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 29.

28. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, May 30, 1938, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

29. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, June 16, 1938, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

30. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, December 2, 1939, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

31. When Carr visited the exhibit of her work organized by Nan Cheney at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1938, she invited Macdonald to bring a couple of his modalities to Cheney's house for Carr to see. Carr wrote to Macdonald: "I think I see what you are after and I think they are beautiful. 'Rain' and the little one of the sea remain with me the clearest but all need to be studied far longer than I was able to. The color is lovely and you could come back and back to the thought." Carr to Macdonald, November [1938], National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa. After Macdonald visited Carr's exhibition, he wrote to her: "In your work I find the first conscious expression of the *rhythm of life* through all creation." For the next two decades he strove for that same rhythm in his own work. See Carr to Cheney, October 15 and 19, 1938, cited in *Dear Nan: Letters of Emily Carr, Nan Cheney and Humphrey Toms*, ed. Doreen Walker (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 116.



32. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, October 24, 1938, Correspondence with Artists – Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

33. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, June 16, 1938, National Gallery of Canada Archives, Ottawa. Although we have no correspondence between Harris and Macdonald during the mid-1930s when they were independently exploring abstraction, Macdonald included Harris's 1938 Santa Fe contact information in his address book. See *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 133.

34. The handwritten notes for this lecture, first delivered in 1940, are in the collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.

35. Recommendations made by participants at the Kingston Conference of Canadian Artists, June 26–29, 1941, included the need for a national arts council. Later that year the Federation of Canadian Artists was founded in Toronto, and branches soon followed across the country.

36. Both artists exhibited at the pivotal 1936 International Surrealist Exhibition in London, where Pailthorpe met Breton and where they exchanged ideas on the unconscious in science and artistic creativity. During the exhibition, Breton described many of the English entries as "unsatisfactory" and "eclectic" and challenged the idea that the works were Surrealist in character at all. (Art historian Herbert Read had been the driving force behind the inclusion of many non-Surrealist artists in the exhibition.) Breton singled out the work of Pailthorpe and Mednikoff as "the best and most truly Surrealist of the works exhibited by the British artists." Yves Tanguy, another Surrealist artist, also expressed admiration for their work because of its originality and variety, which he said he found difficult to create in his own work. See *Sluice Gates of the Mind: The Collaborative Work of Pailthorpe and Mednikoff*, ed. Nigel Walsh and Andrew Wilson (Leeds Museums and Galleries, 1998) and the review by Stuart Nolan, "'Sluice Gates of the Mind' at Leeds Central Gallery: Groundbreaking exhibit on British Surrealism," *World Socialist Web Site*, May 12, 1998, [www.wsws.org/en/articles/1998/05/sur-m12.html](http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/1998/05/sur-m12.html).

37. For an excellent overview of Pailthorpe and Mednikoff's work and history, see Linda Jansma, "Jock Macdonald, Dr. Grace W. Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff: A Lesson in Automatics," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 39–73.

38. Pailthorpe Lecture on Surrealism, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh (SNGMA), MGA A62/1/37. Pailthorpe kept Macdonald's letters as well as the drawings and paintings he made during his intensive study with her, and today they form an important archive of the evolution of his automatic work.

39. Quoted in Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, April 3, 1945, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh.

40. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, April 3, 1945, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh.

41. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, June 6, 1946, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 167.

42. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, October 29, 1946, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 168.

43. "Palette," *The Vancouver Daily Province*, August 22, 1946.

44. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, October 29, 1946, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 168.

45. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, April 27, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 173.

46. See James W.G. Macdonald, "Heralding a New Group," *Canadian Art* 5 (1947), 35–36. Principal among those who exhibited with the Calgary Group were Maxwell Bates and Marion Nicoll, along with Macdonald himself. Macdonald arranged for the group to have its first major exhibition, *The Calgary Group*, at the Vancouver Art Gallery in November 1947. This show included the work of Maxwell Bates, Marion Nicoll, Luke and Vivian Lindoe, Janet Mitchell, Wesley Irwin, H.B. Hill, W.L. Stevenson, Dorothy Willis, and Cliff Robinson.

47. "Palette," *The Vancouver Daily Province*, August 22, 1946.

48. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, October 29, 1946, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 170.

49. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, May 31, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 173.

50. Macdonald to Nan Cheney, June 27, 1947, Nan Lawson Cheney Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library, Vancouver.

51. For an overview, see Michelle Jacques, "Finding His Way: Jock Macdonald's Toronto Years," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 74–113.

52. Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, November 9, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 175.

53. As late as 1958, despite the increasing recognition of modernist expression, the newly formed and conservative Institute of Artists was attacking "the Abstract lunatics." Macdonald wrote to Maxwell Bates, "There is a new art group in town called 'the Institute of Artists.' They already have a charter + by having this they can open an art school if they wish to. This they may do. The group has been organized by Kenneth Forbes [1892-1980], Manly MacDonald [1889-1971], [Frederick] Challenor [1869-1959] + the 'realists' around Toronto. ...They have been attacking the National Gallery, the College of Art ('filled with abstract instructors whom students resent'), 'the Abstract lunatics' etc."

Macdonald to Bates, February 17, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

Macdonald wrote to the Nicolls that the institute's "intention is to kill all modern expressions and get things back to the good old light and shade days, back to landscape and honest to goodness academic portraiture." Macdonald to Jim and Marion Nicoll, May 28, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

54. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, March 17, 1951, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

55. Quoted in Margaret McLaughlin's notebooks, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

56. Macdonald to Pailthorpe, April 7, 1949, cited in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 182.

57. See p. 145 of *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape* for images of this work and others from the period that were influenced by the Indonesian experience in subject and style (i.e., *Flower Worshippers*, 1950; *Eastern Potentate*, c. 1951; and *The Dancers (Medieval Warrior)*, 1951; all in private collections).

58. Review (special reviewer), "Macdonald's Art Easy to Live With," *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, B.C., July 20, 1952.

59. The exhibition toured the southern Ontario gallery circuit.

60. See Rodolphe de Repentigny, "Le Groupe des onzes," *Vie des arts* 3, no. 12 (Automne 1958): 29.

61. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, March 20, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal. He wrote to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, April 15, 1954: "We had a very successful show, with a number of sales + record crowds."

62. Macdonald to Jim and Marion Nicoll, November 5, 1954, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal. Macdonald noted in a letter to Maxwell Bates that they had found a "very nice lower [floor] of a villa nicely furnished with some African sculpture ... [and] reproductions of Cézanne, Gauguin, Matisse, Derain, etc...." Macdonald to Bates, December 26, 1954, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

63. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, March 20, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.



64. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, July 9, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

65. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, July 30, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

66. Not all members of Painters Eleven agreed to meet Greenberg.

67. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, February 17, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

68. Macdonald to Jim and Marion Nicoll, May 28, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal. Clement Greenberg wrote to Joyce Zemans, July 15, 1978: "I thought he was on his way to becoming a late blooming luminary of Canadian art—his art was getting better and better but he didn't and hasn't gotten the attention he deserved." Greenberg added, "Last but not least, Jock was a first class human being."

69. Maxwell Bates, "Jock Macdonald, Painter-Explorer," *Canadian Art*, Summer 1957, 151–53.

70. Quoted in Macdonald to Bates, December 10, 1957, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

71. Macdonald to Bates, May 17, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

72. Macdonald to Bates, May 17, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

73. Macdonald to Frank Palmer, March 18, 1960: "I want to paint steadily for the years I have left. I feel I have much to say and I must see that I retain my energy for my work."

74. Macdonald to Bates, February 17, 1960, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

75. Macdonald to Bates, February 17, 1960, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

76. Macdonald to Bates, May 10, 1960, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

77. Thelma Van Alstyne to Joyce Zemans, October 1978, Joyce Zemans papers (Joyce Zemans's archival records will be donated to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University, in 2017). Van Alstyne was quoting from a letter written to her by Macdonald from the hospital in November 1960.

78. Thelma Van Alstyne to Joyce Zemans, October 1978, Joyce Zemans papers.



## KEY WORKS: LYTTON CHURCH

1. Macdonald to Gerald Tyler, January 2, 1936, Burnaby Art Gallery Archive.

## KEY WORKS: THE BLACK TUSK

1. J.W.G. Macdonald, "Vancouver," in F.H. Varley, *Paintings and Drawings 1915-1954* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Toronto, 1954).

## KEY WORKS: IN THE WHITE FOREST

1. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, April 2, 1937, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

1. By the early 1930s, Macdonald's personal notes, as well as recollections from his students, indicate that he was deeply engaged in his search for understanding the spiritual in art. He had read Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (originally published in English as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, 1914), and he refers to Kandinsky (1866-1944) in his handwritten "Colour Notes," c. 1932. He also refers to "Science and the Infinite (Sydney Klein)" in his notes (collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer). Artist Jack Shadbolt (1909-1998) recalled discussing Bertram Brooker's *Yearbook of the Arts*, 1928-29, which included articles by Brooker (1888-1955) and Lawren Harris (1885-1970) addressing the importance for artists of moving beyond traditional art forms to express the experience of modernity in art. Students at the British Columbia College of Arts and at the Ontario College of Art remember Macdonald citing *Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought, A Key to the Enigmas of the World* (1922), by P.D. Ouspensky (1878-1947) and recommending it to them. He also read books by Claude Bragdon, the author of *A Primer of Higher Space (The Fourth Dimension)* (1913). For a detailed analysis of the sources of Macdonald's engagement in the spiritual and the occult, see Allison Colborne, "Jock Macdonald: The Search for Universal Truth in Nature" (MA thesis, Department of Art History, Concordia University, 1992).

3. Lawren S. Harris, "Revelation of Art in Canada," *The Canadian Theosophist* 7, no. 5 (July 1926): 85-88.

## KEY WORKS: FORMATIVE COLOUR ACTIVITY

1. As described by Gerald Tyler, interview with Joyce Zemans, February 28, 1978.
2. Beatrice Lennie, interview with Joyce Zemans, September 25, 1978. Lennie recalled that the Macdonald family was out of town the day he painted this work. That evening he rushed into her house, shouting, "I must be daft!" and looking for reassurance that he wasn't.
3. See Sheryl Salloum, "John Vanderpant and the Cultural Life of Vancouver (1920-39)," in *B.C. Studies* no. 97 (Spring 1993): 38-50; and Salloum, *Underlying Vibrations: The Photography and Life of John Vanderpant* (Victoria: Horsdal & Schubart, 1995).



4. Amédée Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, trans. John Rodker (1931; repr., New York: Dover, 1952), 266. Artist Philip Surry told Charles Hill in an interview, September 14, 1973, that Ozenfant was popular in the early 1930s and that Macdonald had purchased Ozenfant's *Foundations of Modern Art* around 1933 and was a regular reader of *The Studio*. National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

5. Macdonald submitted it along with *Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound, B.C.*, 1935 –the only large canvas he completed at Nootka. Both works were accepted for the exhibition.

#### KEY WORKS: DEPARTING DAY

1. The painting has two dates on it, one on the upper left and the other on the bottom right, signed in pencil. Macdonald often signed, dated his paintings just before they were exhibited. This painting was first exhibited in 1938, at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

2. J.W.G. Macdonald handwritten notes, "Science and the Infinite (Sydney Klein)," collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.

3. Beatrice Lennie, interview with Joyce Zemans, February 25, 1978. Lennie recalled great interest in and discussions about current scientific investigations, X-rays, cosmic rays, and in particular the theories of Arthur Compton, as set out in R.D. Bennett with J.C. Stearns and Arthur Compton, "The Constancy of Cosmic Rays," *Physical Review* 38, no. 8 (October 15, 1931). Popular journals such as *Scientific American* and *National Geographic* often included articles on cosmic rays, illustrated with photographs similar to those in Amédée Ozenfant's *Foundations of Modern Art* (translated into English, 1931).

4. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 157.

5. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, October 16, 1936, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 157.

6. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, March 26, 1937, Correspondence with Artists – Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

#### KEY WORKS: ETHERIC FORM

1. J.W.G. Macdonald, "Colour Notes III(C)," collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.

2. J.W.G. Macdonald, "Science and the Infinite (Sydney Klein)," collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.

**KEY WORKS: FALL (MODALITY 16)**

1. In his 1940 speech "Art in Relation to Nature," Macdonald recommended P.D. Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought, A Key to the Enigmas of the World* (1922) to those who wished to explore the fourth dimension which "deals with new concepts of Time and Space." He explained, "By Time we mean the distance separating events in the order of their succession & binding them in different wholes." This distance lies in a "direction not contained in three dimensional space, therefore it will be in the new dimensions of space." (9). In the same speech, he spoke of the theories of Albert Einstein, Arthur Eddington, J.J. Thomson, Hermann Minkowski, and Oliver Lodge, among others.

**KEY WORKS: INDIAN BURIAL, NOOTKA**

1. Ian Thom observes that the absence of the mask in the sketch suggests that Macdonald added it to make direct reference to the suppression of First Nations peoples' traditions by both religious authorities and the Canadian government. See "The Early Work: An Artist Emerges," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 24. Macdonald's empathy for Indigenous people is reflected in his remarks to Harry McCurry regarding the mural representing the village that he painted for the Hotel Vancouver: the "two Indian figures [are] more stooped and sadder than suggested" in the photograph that he had included representing a preliminary version of the work. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, May 29, 1939, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

2. Vancouver Art Gallery, *The Art Gallery Bulletin*, 6, no. 1 (September, 1938). The title above the image on the front page of the *Bulletin* reads, in capital letters: "Added to Canadian Collection."

3. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, June 16, 1938, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

**KEY WORKS: SCENT OF A SUMMER GARDEN**

1. Macdonald to Marion Nicoll, October 21, 1948, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal. See *Life*, October 4, 1948, 56-79.

**KEY WORKS: BLACK EVOLVING FORMS**

1. Macdonald gave a public lecture on modern art at the Willistead Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Windsor) in which he discussed this painting. "Noted Painter Lectures on Modern Art," *Windsor Daily Star*, January 22, 1954.

**KEY WORKS: AIRY JOURNEY**

1. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, July 3, 1957, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.



2. "I have at last managed to paint freely in oil—automatically—as I did earlier in water-colour." Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, Christmas 1957, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, GMA A62/1/171.

### KEY WORKS: LEGEND OF THE ORIENT

1. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, February 17, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

2. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, May 17, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal. He noted that a number of works had been purchased by a London gallery, and that American artist Rico Lebrun (1900–1964) thought his work was "great."

### KEY WORKS: NATURE EVOLVING

1. Hugo McPherson review, "The Galleries: Jock Macdonald," CJBC, January 17, 1969.

2. Exhibited with the Ontario Society of Artists in 1959, *Fleeting Breath* was, as Macdonald proudly wrote to Maxwell Bates, acquired that year by the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) "for its 20th century collection" with one of the early Canada Council Joint Purchase Awards. Macdonald to Bates, April 17, 1959, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

3. Thelma Van Alstyne to Joyce Zemans, October 1978, Joyce Zemans papers (Joyce Zemans's archival records will be donated to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University, in 2017): "He showed slides of natural imagery. Slides of acid drops that resembled butterfly wings and suggested beautiful imagery as subject matter for paintings. While students viewed these slides as non-objective art; he would explain that they were acid drops, therefore a basis in nature—to be used for creative imagination."

4. J.W.G. Macdonald, "Art in Relation to Nature," 1940. The handwritten lecture is reproduced in Joyce Zemans, *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), 268–78.

### KEY WORKS: FAR OFF DRUMS

1. Here and Now Gallery press release, January 1960.

2. Macdonald to J. Russell Harper, January 20, 1952, location unknown.

### SIGNIFICANCE & CRITICAL ISSUES

1. Macdonald to McCurry, March 26, 1937.

2. J.W.G. Macdonald, "The Development of Painting in the West, Observations on a Decade 1938–48," *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 25, no. 1: 20.

3. Lawren S. Harris, "Revelation of Art in Canada," *The Canadian Theosophist* 7, no. 5 (July 1926): 85–88.

4. Published Toronto: Macmillan, 1930.

5. Bertram Brooker, "Seven Arts," July 20, 1929: "Why attempt to create parochialism in art and literature by seeking some sort of national fetish to worship.... My own feeling is that when they have forgotten these unimportant labels and have responded purely to our time and our country we shall produce art and literature comparable with the rest of the world." In his October 19, 1929, column he explained that abstraction had resulted from the search for painting that would provide a release from the concern with representation. He wrote that painterly composition, like music, uses "rhythms and colours to achieve a harmonious whole or unity." These often "mean nothing just as the best music means nothing."

6. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, rev. ed. New York: Wittenborn Schulz, 1947, 32.

7. The handwritten notes for this lecture, first delivered in 1940, are in the collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.

8. Anna Hudson, "Jock Macdonald's Weave of Reality," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 114-31.

9. At the time of his death, Macdonald had in his possession an article in the February 6, 1956, issue of *Time* magazine, "Notes from the Underground." In it he had underlined the passage, "In his abstraction, [he] feels that he is groping toward a universal language increasingly understood everywhere."

10. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, May 10, 1943, Correspondence with Artists - Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

11. J.W.G. Macdonald, written for the Willistead Art Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Windsor) exhibition *Four Modern Canadians*, 1954.

12. This oil on canvas painting, though dated 1936, was most certainly painted after Macdonald's return to Vancouver, probably in 1937.

13. He acknowledged that it might be "too subtle" for consideration. In 1936, while still at Nootka, he had sent his first semi-abstract work, *Formative Colour Activity*, 1934, to Toronto for inclusion in the first Canadian Group of Painters exhibition.

14. Unfortunately the gallery has no list of the works exhibited in this show, May 9-18, 1941, in its archives. Archivist Joanna Spurling, Library, Vancouver Art Gallery, notes in email to Joyce Zemans, November 12, 2015, that another show of Macdonald's work was held that year (September 9-21) at the VAG, but no records exist for that exhibition either.



15. "All art is an expression of man's consciousness and as he adopts a new concept of nature, so in turn is it reflected in creative art' declared J.W.G. Macdonald in opening the first Canadian Abstract exhibition at the Y.W.C.A. last night." Quoted from "Today's Art Reflects New Concept of Nature"—J.W.G. Macdonald," *The Daily Times Gazette*, Oshawa, Ontario, October 17, 1952.

16. "Rebels in Manhattan," *Time*, May 7, 1956.

17. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, January 30, 1956, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

18. Macdonald to Bates, July 30, 1956; see also April 3, 1956, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

19. The National Gallery toured this exhibition to seven major Canadian venues in 1958–59. It was shown at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, September 5–21, 1958; Fine Arts Gallery, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, September 26–October 12, 1958; Calgary Allied Arts Centre, November 7–23, 1958; Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina College, November 28–December 28, 1958; Edmonton Art Gallery, January 2–February 8, 1959; Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, February 13–March 1, 1959; and Mount Allison School of Fine and Applied Arts, Sackville, March 6–22, 1959.

20. Rodolphe de Repentigny, "Le Groupe des onze," *Vie des Arts* 3, no. 12 (Automne 1958): 29.

21. Maxwell Bates, "Jock Macdonald: Painter-Explorer," *Canadian Art* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1957): 152–53.

22. Macdonald to Bates, May 10, 1960, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

23. See Alicia Boutillier et al., *A Vital Force: The Canadian Group of Painters* (Kingston and Oshawa: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, and The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2013).

24. Members of the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts formed the British Columbia Art League, which was responsible for the campaign for an art gallery. In 1949 the organization's name was changed to the British Columbia Society of Artists.

25. He added that he had been invited to become an honorary member of the Alberta Society of Artists and accepted for reasons of "diplomacy." Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, February 23, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 171. On April 27, 1947, he wrote: "I have formed a group of six progressive young artists + have obtained the North Gallery [at the Vancouver Art Gallery] for their first showing." (172)



26. Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, February 23, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 171.

See James W.G. Macdonald, "Heralding a New Group," *Canadian Art* 5, no. 1 (Autumn 1947): 35–36 (a special edition focusing on British Columbia and Alberta).

27. Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, April 27, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 171.

28. Macdonald to Marion and Jim Nicoll, Christmas 1954, from Vence, France, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

29. Macdonald to Marion and Jim Nicoll, May 28, 1958, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

30. Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, October 29, 1946, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 170.

31. Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, September 29, 1948, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 180.

32. Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, November 9, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 174.

33. Thelma Van Alstyne to Joyce Zemans, October 1978, Joyce Zemans papers (Joyce Zemans's archival records will be donated to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University, in 2017).

34. William Ronald to Ann Pollock, February 23, 1969, cited in R. Ann Pollock and Dennis Reid, *Jock Macdonald, Retrospective Exhibition* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969), 32.

35. Macdonald wrote to John Varley, September 9, 1939, "As long as I am in a job I am able to be helpful. Remember Van Gogh had a brother and it was only through his brother that he was actually able to give the world his genius. I feel that I could be a little 'Theo' to you occasionally. How about it at this time?" McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

36. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, July 9, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

37. Macdonald to Frank Palmer, March 18, 1960, shared with Joyce Zemans by Frank Palmer, October 2, 1978.



38. Macdonald to H.O. McCurry, November 1, 1943, Correspondence with Artists – Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.

### STYLE & TECHNIQUE

1. J.W.G. Macdonald, "The Ever Open Book in the Matter of Design," *The Paint Box* 2 (June 1927): 47.

2. Around 1930, Macdonald illustrated a book of verse celebrating the north country: Annie Charlotte Dalton, *The Neighing North* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1931).

3. Barbara Macdonald, interview with Joyce Zemans, February 6, 1978.

4. Macdonald to Gerald Tyler, January 2, 1936, Burnaby Art Gallery Archive.

5. Nan Cheney to Eric Brown, July 20, 1938, in *Dear Nan: Letters of Emily Carr, Nan Cheney and Humphrey Toms*, ed. Doreen Walker (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 96. Cheney continued, "I am sure he would repay a backer as he has a keen sense of responsibility—he finds teaching an awful grind & only does it in order to live which leaves him [weekends] only to paint. There should be some sort of fund or scholarship for such people."

6. Quoted in J. Delisle Parker, "Famed Local Artist Marooned at Christmas in Lighthouse," *The Vancouver Daily Province*, December 23, 1944.

7. Macdonald to Grace Pailthorpe, June 5, 1946, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh.

8. To give some sense of the context in which Macdonald developed his ideas: In 1927 Brooker had a solo exhibition of what he called "pure painting" in Toronto's Arts & Letters Club—the first solo exhibition of abstract and non-objective art in Canada. From 1928 to 1930 he wrote a syndicated newspaper column, "The Seven Arts," focusing on contemporary art for the Southam newspapers. The 1928-29 Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, which he edited, was read in artistic circles across the country. In 1926 Harris published "Revelation of Art in Canada" in *The Canadian Theosophist*, and by 1938 he was in New Mexico, working with the Transcendental Painting Group and exploring abstract art.

9. "Vanderpant was a great influence before anyone else was doing anything [in Vancouver]—Georgia O'Keeffe type of things." Nan Cheney, phone conversation with Joyce Zemans, February 22, 1979.

10. J.W.G. Macdonald, "Art in Relation to Nature." The handwritten notes for this lecture, first delivered in 1940, are in the collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.

11. Macdonald, "My General Approach to Painting" in the exhibition catalogue for *Four Modern Canadians* at the Willistead Gallery (now Art Gallery of Windsor), 1954.



12. From Macdonald's Nootka diary, reproduced in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2015), 157.

13. Macdonald's Nootka diary, October 24, 1936, in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2015), 158.

14. At the time of his death, Macdonald owned a copy of Harris's *Abstract Painting: A Disquisition* (Toronto: Rous and Mann, 1954).

15. Pailthorpe Collection, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh.

16. G. Pailthorpe, "The Scientific Aspects of Surrealism," *London Bulletin* no. 17 (June 1938): 15.

17. Macdonald, "Biographical Notes," undated (after 1955), McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.

18. Interview with Marion Nicoll conducted by Helen K. Wright and Ingrid Mercer, February 5, 1983, Glenbow Archive 403.1, part 3, cited in Ann Davis and Elizabeth Herbert, *Marion Nicoll: Silence and Alchemy* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2013), 37. Herbert argues that the automatic painting method gave Nicoll the assurance to move into abstraction—and that critics have overlooked its importance. In Nicoll's words: "It gave me assurance. I'm now absolutely sure that I have a place on which I stand, from which I can paint; that's what automatic drawing did. It beat a path in and I know that I'm not going to dry up." (38). According to Macdonald, the appearance of biomorphic forms in Nicoll's drawings demonstrated her connection to the unconscious: "Ha! Ha! This is interesting news about what is happening in your automatic paintings. Things are beginning to move ... now that you find things definitely suggestive of nature forms, you can be sure that the door is open—Excellent!" Joyce Zemans, *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981), 120. For the next decade, Nicoll filled hundreds of sketchbooks following that advice but kept all those images to herself. Ann Davis and Elizabeth Herbert, *Marion Nicoll: Silence and Alchemy* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2013), 38.

19. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, January 13, 1948, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 176.

20. Colin Graham, interview with Joyce Zemans, March 1, 1978.

21. In her discussion of Marion Nicoll's work, Elizabeth Herbert notes that the American art critic Lawrence Alloway called the decade the "biomorphic 40s," in which crowded manic biomorphism is directly linked to automatism—a practice that was cultivated by the Surrealists as a means of direct access to the unconscious mind. Davis and Herbert, *Marion Nicoll*, 38.



22. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, November 9, 1947, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 174.
23. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, September 29, 1948, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 179. Macdonald continued: "We returned to Toronto with a superb automatic water-colour of [Hofmann's] painted in 1945."
24. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, September 29, 1948, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 179.
25. Macdonald to Pailthorpe and Mednikoff, September 29, 1948, in "Correspondence," in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 179.
26. Macdonald to Marion Nicoll, October 21, 1948, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.
27. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, December 5, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.
28. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, March 20, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.
29. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, July 9, 1955, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.
30. Ray Mead, interview with Joan Murray, September 4, 1977, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.
31. Macdonald to Maxwell Bates, July 30, 1956, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.
32. Macdonald to Pailthorpe, "probably 1957" (this note written in hand by someone other than Macdonald), the letter begins, "With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year." In "Correspondence" in *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom (London, Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 197.
33. Macdonald to Bates, August 7, 1957, McCord Museum Archives, Montreal.
34. Thelma Van Alstyne to Joyce Zemans, October 1978, Joyce Zemans papers (Joyce Zemans's archival records will be donated to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University, in 2017).



35. Thelma Van Alstyne to Joyce Zemans, October 1978, Joyce Zemans papers (Joyce Zemans's archival records will be donated to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University, in 2017).

36. Maxwell Bates, "Jock Macdonald, Painter-Explorer," *Canadian Art* 14, no. 4 (summer 1957): 152-53.

#### SOURCES & RESOURCES

1. "Mathematics in Art Discussed," *Vancouver Sun*, 8 February, p. 13.

## GLOSSARY

### **abstract art**

Visual art that uses form, colour, line, and gestural marks in compositions that do not attempt to represent images of real things. Abstract art may interpret reality in an altered form, or depart from it entirely. Also called nonfigurative or nonrepresentational art.

### **Abstract Expressionism**

A style that flourished in New York in the 1940s and 1950s, defined by its combination of formal abstraction and self-conscious expression. The term describes a wide variety of work; among the most famous Abstract Expressionists are Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Willem de Kooning.

### **Anthroposophy**

Anthroposophy is a spiritual philosophy, developed by Rudolf Steiner at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. It holds that the spiritual element in human beings can be experienced in concrete ways and subjected to scientific quantification. The curriculum of Waldorf schools around the world today is based on Steiner's educational theories and anthroposophical philosophy. The pedagogy emphasizes the role of imagination in learning, striving to integrate holistically the intellectual, practical, and artistic development of the pupils.

### **Art Deco**

A decorative style of the early twentieth century, first exhibited in Paris in 1925 at the Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes. The style had several influences, including Egyptian and Asian motifs, modernist fine art movements, and its design predecessor, Art Nouveau.

### **automatism**

A physiological term first applied to art by the Surrealists to refer to processes such as free association and spontaneous, intuitive writing, drawing, and painting that allow access to the subconscious without the interference of planning or controlled thought.

### **Automatistes**

A Montreal-based artists' group interested in Surrealism and the Surrealist technique of automatism. Centred on the artist, teacher, and theorist Paul-Émile Borduas, the Automatistes exhibited regularly between 1946 and 1954, making Montreal a locus of mid-century avant-garde art. Members included Marcel Barbeau, Marcelle Ferron, Jean-Paul Mousseau, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Fernand Leduc, and Françoise Sullivan.

### **Bates, Maxwell (Canadian, 1906–1980)**

An architect and artist whose expressionistic paintings are held at major institutions across Canada. As a soldier with the British Territorial Army during the Second World War, Bates was captured in France and spent five years in a POW camp. He recounted the experience in his book *A Wilderness of Days* (1978).



### **Besant, Annie (British, 1847–1933)**

A prominent social reformer who was active with numerous causes from the 1870s through the 1920s, chiefly women's and workers' rights, women's health, national education, and Indian independence. In 1893 Besant settled in India, where she established the Indian Home Rule League and became an important member of the Indian National Congress. She was a member and a leader of the Theosophical Society, contributing to the worldwide spread of this esoteric spiritual movement.

### **Borduas, Paul-Émile (Canadian, 1905–1960)**

The leader of the avant-garde Automatistes and one of Canada's most important modern artists. Borduas was also an influential advocate for reform in Quebec, calling for liberation from religious and narrow nationalist values in the 1948 manifesto *Refus global*. (See *Paul-Émile Borduas: Life & Work* by François-Marc Gagnon.)

### **Breton, André (French, 1896–1966)**

A poet and the leader of the Surrealists, whose members included the artists Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, and Man Ray, and the poets Paul and Gala Éluard. Breton outlined in successive manifestos the tenets and techniques of Surrealism, and he organized the group's first exhibition in 1925.

### **Brooker, Bertram (Canadian, 1888–1955)**

A British-born painter, illustrator, musician, poet, Governor General's Award-winning novelist, and Toronto advertising executive. In 1927 Brooker became the first Canadian artist to exhibit abstract art. His work is in the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, and other major collections.

### **Calgary Group**

A group of artists important to the history of modern art in Canada. The Calgary Group promoted non-objective art in Western Canada in the late 1940s, at the same time that Paul-Émile Borduas and the Automatistes advocated for its legitimacy in Quebec and elsewhere.

### **Canadian Group of Painters**

Founded in 1933 after the disbanding of the Group of Seven by former members and their associates, the Canadian Group of Painters championed modernist painting styles against the entrenched traditionalism of the Royal Canadian Academy. They provided a platform for artists across Canada who were pursuing a variety of new concerns, from the formal experimentation of Bertram Brooker to the modern-figure subjects of Prudence Heward and Pegi Nicol MacLeod and the expressive landscapes of Emily Carr.

### **Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour**

An organization launched in 1925 to promote work in watercolour. Founding members included influential figures in the history of Canadian art, such as Franklin Carmichael and C.W. Jefferys. A prestigious group with links to major Canadian art institutions in its early days, it currently manages, along with five other societies, its own gallery in downtown Toronto.



### Carr, Emily (Canadian, 1871–1945)

A pre-eminent B.C.-based artist and writer, Carr is renowned today for her bold and vibrant images of both the Northwest Coast landscape and its Native peoples. Educated in California, England, and France, she was influenced by a variety of modern art movements but ultimately developed a unique aesthetic style. She was one of the first West Coast artists to achieve national recognition. (See *Emily Carr: Life & Work* by Lisa Baldissera.)

### Cheney, Nan (Canadian, 1897–1985)

A well-known B.C. portrait painter, Cheney was the first staff medical artist at the University of British Columbia, creating anatomical images for the Faculty of Medicine from 1951 to 1962. She moved to Vancouver in 1937. Cheney met and corresponded with many Canadian artists and enjoyed a close friendship with Emily Carr in the period before Carr's work gained general acceptance. She collected material about Carr until December 1979. Her correspondence with artists has been collected in *Dear Nan: Letters from Emily Carr, Nan Cheney and Humphrey Toms*, ed. Doreen Walker (1990).

### Conference of Canadian Artists (Kingston Conference)

A conference organized by the painter André Biéler in 1941 in Kingston, Ontario, attended by some 150 visual artists, writers, poets, and others interested in the arts in Canada. Among those present were Lawren Harris, Elizabeth Wyn Wood, Arthur Lismer, Alma Duncan, F.R. Scott, Miller Brittain, Walter Abell, A.Y. Jackson, and the American painter Thomas Hart Benton. Based on Biéler's recommendation for a national federation of artists and on other initiatives of the conference, the Federation of Canadian Artists was set up; the visual arts magazine *Canadian Art* was launched; and in 1957 the Canada Council for the Arts was created.

### Cézanne, Paul (French, 1839–1906)

A painter of arguably unparalleled influence on the development of modern art, associated with the Post-Impressionist school and known for his technical experiments with colour and form and his interest in multiple-point perspective. In his maturity Cézanne had several preferred subjects, including portraits of his wife, still lifes, and Provençal landscapes.

### Dubuffet, Jean (French, 1901–1985)

A rebellious avant-garde artist whose career spanned some fifty years and encompassed painting, sculpting, and printmaking. Dubuffet railed against intellectual authority in culture, countering it with *art brut* (literally, "raw art"). His oeuvre evidences frequent shifts in style and impassioned experimentation.

### Federation of Canadian Artists

A non-profit, membership-based organization devoted to advancing Canadian art at home. It was founded in 1941 by artists including André Biéler and Lawren Harris, both members of the Group of Seven. The Federation of Canadian Artists maintains a members' gallery on Granville Island, Vancouver.



### Gordon, Hortense (Canadian, 1889–1961)

A founding member of Painters Eleven, Gordon was known for her bold abstract paintings. She taught at Hamilton Technical School and was appointed principal in 1934.

### Gorky, Arshile (Armenian/American, 1904–1948)

Gorky immigrated to the United States after his mother died in his arms during the Armenian genocide. Among the most eminent painters of the postwar New York School, he had a seminal influence on Abstract Expressionism, and he was a mentor to other artists, including Willem de Kooning.

### Gottlieb, Adolph (American, 1903–1974)

Gottlieb's early representational work evolved toward the surreal and Abstract Expressionism, by which he sought to remove from cultural associations from his work in order to convey a universal language of expression. He was the first American to win the Grand Prize at the Bienal de São Paolo (1963).

### Greenberg, Clement (American, 1909–1994)

A highly influential art critic and essayist known primarily for his formalist approach and his contentious concept of modernism, which he first outlined in his 1961 article "Modernist Painting." Greenberg was, notably, an early champion of Abstract Expressionists, including Jackson Pollock and the sculptor David Smith.

### Group of Seven

A progressive and nationalistic school of landscape painting in Canada, active between 1920 (the year of the group's first exhibition, at the Art Gallery of Toronto, now the Art Gallery of Ontario) and 1933. Founding members were the artists Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald, and Frederick Varley.

### Harris, Lawren (Canadian, 1885–1970)

A founding member of the Group of Seven in Toronto in 1920, Harris was widely considered its unofficial leader. His landscape-painting style, unlike that of the other members of the Group, evolved into pure abstraction. The Group of Seven broke up in 1933, and when the Canadian Group of Painters was formed in 1933, Harris was elected its first president.

### Hofmann, Hans (German/American, 1880–1966)

A major figure in Abstract Expressionism and a renowned teacher. Hofmann's career began in Paris, where he moved to study in 1904. In 1915 he founded an art school in Munich that eventually drew international students, including the American Louise Nevelson, and taught there until the early 1930s, when he immigrated to the United States. Little of his early work survives.

### Jackson, A.Y. (Canadian, 1882–1974)

A founding member of the Group of Seven and an important voice in the formation of a distinctively Canadian artistic tradition. A Montreal native, Jackson studied painting in Paris before moving to Toronto in 1913; his northern landscapes are characterized by the bold brushstrokes and vivid colours of his Impressionist and Post-Impressionist influences.



### Kandinsky, Wassily (Russian, 1866–1944)

An artist, teacher, and philosopher who settled in Germany and later in France, Kandinsky was central to the development of abstract art. Much of his work conveys his interest in the relationships between colour, sound, and emotion. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911), his famous treatise on abstraction, draws on mysticism and theories of divinity.

### Kline, Franz (American, 1910–1962)

An Abstract Expressionist painter and draftsman whose gestural works drew inspiration from contemporaries such as Arshile Gorky and Willem de Kooning. From the late 1940s Kline's paintings were largely black and white, but in the last years of his career he returned to a full-colour palette.

### Lennie, Beatrice (Canadian, 1905–1987)

A painter, sculptor, theatre designer, cinema art director, and educator trained at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (now the Emily Carr University of Art + Design) and the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute). She taught sculpture at the short-lived British Columbia College of Arts in 1934 and, in the 1930s and 1940s, was one of the few women sculptors in Canada. She is known for her semi-abstract paintings and sculptures, which were exhibited across Canada and in the western United States.

### Luke, Alexandra (Canadian, 1901–1967)

An Abstract Expressionist painter and a member of Painters Eleven, Luke trained at the Banff School of Fine Arts and the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts in Massachusetts. A significant figure in early Canadian abstract art, she was included in the exhibition *Canadian Women Artists* in New York in 1947.

### Mead, Ray (British/Canadian, 1921–1998)

A founding member of Painters Eleven, Mead was an Abstract Expressionist painter whose work, characterized by bold planes of colour, black and white shapes, and sophisticated composition, was inspired by his internal reflections on memories.

### Mednikoff, Reuben (British, 1906–1972)

An artist and poet who became the consort of Dr. Grace Pailthorpe. He introduced this influential teacher to the Surrealist technique of automatism. Mednikoff and Pailthorpe exhibited work at the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936 and Andre Breton praised theirs as the best shown by British artists. Medinkoff, along with Pailthorpe, was also a founding member of the British Surrealist Group.



### modernism

A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century in all the arts, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society.

Beginning in painting with the Realist movement led by Gustave Courbet, it progressed through Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

### Mondrian, Piet (Dutch, 1872–1944)

A leading figure in abstract art, known for his geometric "grid" paintings of straight black lines and brightly coloured squares, whose influence on contemporary visual culture has been called the most far-reaching of any artist. Mondrian saw his highly restrictive and rigorous style, dubbed Neo-Plasticism, as expressive of universal truths.

### Mortimer-Lamb, Harold (British/Canadian, 1872–1970)

Although Lamb's career was in the mining industry, he was also an art critic. In appreciative articles in *The Canadian Magazine* and Britain's *The Studio*, to introduce the Group of Seven. As a photographer and collector of paintings, ceramics, and photography, he co-founded the Vanderpaint Galleries in Vancouver and played a leading role in the Vancouver art scene. He helped found the Vancouver Art Gallery. (See Robert Amos's 2013 book *Harold Mortimer-Lamb: The Art Lover*.)

### Nicoll, Marion (Canadian, 1909–1985)

A painter and an important figure in the Alberta art scene in the mid-twentieth century, particularly for her role in introducing abstract art to her students and colleagues. Nicoll was the first female teacher at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (now Alberta College of Art and Design), where she had a wide-ranging influence on generations of students. (See Ann Davis and Elizabeth Herbert, *Marion Nicoll: Silence and Alchemy* [2013].)

### Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University)

The name given in 1912 to what had previously been the Ontario School of Art (founded 1876), and what would become the Ontario College of Art and Design in 1996. In 2010 the institution was renamed OCAD University, to reflect its new status. OCAD University is located in Toronto and is the oldest and largest art school in Canada.

### Ontario Society of Artists (OSA)

Canada's oldest extant professional artists' association, formed in 1872 by seven artists from various disciplines. Its first annual exhibition was held in 1873. The OSA eventually played an important role in the founding of OCAD University and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto.

### Ostiguy, Jean-René (Canadian, 1925–2016)

An art historian and curator of Canadian art at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, from 1965 to 86, who specialized in Canadian and particularly Québécois modernism. His publications include monographs on Adrien Hébert and Ozias Leduc, and a survey of modern art in Quebec.



### Ouspensky, P.D. (Russian, 1878–1947)

A mathematician and philosopher who was also an influential figure in London literary circles and the Russian avant garde during the 1920s and 1930s. Today Oupensky is primarily associated with the mystic George Gurdjieff, whose ideas he helped spread through publications and lectures after their first meeting in 1915. His books were very influential among artists for their understanding of metaphysics.

### Ozenfant, Amédée (French, 1886–1966)

An important and active figure in French modernism, associated particularly with the Purist movement. Alongside his work as a painter, Ozenfant founded journals, schools, and art studios dedicated to modern art with contemporaries such as Le Corbusier and Fernand Léger. He exhibited widely throughout his life, including at the landmark 1911 Salon des Indépendants in Paris.

### Pailthorpe, Grace (British, 1883–1971)

A psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who explored aspects of the unconscious through her paintings, drawings, and poems. The artist Reuben Mednikoff introduced her to Surrealism in 1935; in 1936 they helped found the British Surrealist Group and participated in the First International Surrealist Exhibition, where Pailthorpe cemented her reputation as a leader of the movement in Britain. In the early 1940s she worked in Vancouver, lectured on Surrealism and exhibited there, and returned to Britain in 1946.

### Painters Eleven

An artists' group active from 1953 to 1960, formed by eleven Abstract Expressionist Toronto-area painters, including Harold Town, Jack Bush, and William Ronald. They joined together in an effort to increase their exposure, given the limited interest in abstract art in Ontario at the time.

### Picasso, Pablo (Spanish, 1881–1973)

One of the most famous and influential artists of his time, Picasso was a prominent member of the Parisian avant-garde circle that included Henri Matisse and Georges Braque. His painting *Les demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1906–7, is considered by many to be the most important of the twentieth century.

### Pollock, Jackson (American, 1912–1956)

Leader of the Abstract Expressionist movement, best known for his drip paintings of the 1940s and 1950s. Pollock is also closely associated with action painting, in which the act of painting is gestural and the artist approaches the canvas with little notion of what he or she will create.

### Ronald, William (Canadian, 1926–1998)

An Abstract Expressionist and member of Painters Eleven, which sprang from the Toronto group exhibition that he organized in 1953, *Abstracts at Home*. Ronald lived in New York from 1955 to 1965. His work is held both by New York institutions—including the Whitney Museum of American Art, Guggenheim Museum, and Museum of Modern Art—and by numerous Canadian museums.



### Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (RCA)

An organization of professional artists and architects, modelled after national academies long present in Europe, such as the Royal Academy of Arts in the U.K. (founded in 1768) and the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in Paris (founded in 1648). The RCA was founded in 1880 by the Ontario Society of Artists and the Art Association of Montreal.

### Sampson-Matthews Ltd.

A Toronto-based printing and design firm, Sampson-Matthews Ltd. (founded in 1917) worked in partnership with the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, to establish the wartime art project. Between 1942 and 1945, thirty-six high-quality silkscreen images of Canadian subjects by Canadian artists were distributed to Canadian military bases at home and abroad to boost the morale of Canadian troops. The project continued until 1955, and approximately one hundred different prints were distributed to schools across Canada and sold individually. The series is credited with creating a national awareness of Canadian art.

### Société Anonyme

An organization initiated in New York in 1920 by Katherine Dreier, Marcel Duchamp, and Man Ray to promote the appreciation and practice of modern art in the United States. It organized exhibitions, lectures, public programs, and publications and collected actively. The collection is now held at Yale University. Lawren Harris was instrumental in arranging for the Société's International Exhibition of Modern Art to be mounted at the Art Gallery of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) in 1927, creating enormous controversy.

### Steiner, Rudolf (Austrian, 1861–1925)

An architect and the founder of Anthroposophy—a universalist approach to spirituality based on German idealist philosophy and Goethe's ideas of perception and the mind. Steiner's influence as a philosopher and social reformer reached artists and writers, including Saul Bellow, Joseph Beuys, and Wassily Kandinsky. His designs for the Anthroposophical Society are considered important examples of modern architecture.

### Surrealism

An early twentieth-century literary and artistic movement that began in Paris. Surrealism aimed to express the workings of the unconscious, free of convention and reason, and was characterized by fantastic images and incongruous juxtapositions. The movement spread globally, influencing film, theatre, and music.

### Taçon, Percy (British/Canadian, 1902–1983)

An abstract painter and teacher of art and modern languages who emigrated to Canada from London in 1907. He was a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts and the husband of Edna Taçon, a prominent figure in the non-objective art movement during the first half of the twentieth century.



### **van Alstyne, Thelma (Canadian, 1913–2008)**

A largely self-taught artist who studied at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (now the Emily Carr University of Art + Design). After she moved to Toronto, she became involved in the art scene and began to work abstractly. Her work was exhibited at the Pollock Gallery in Toronto and she was elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1977.

### **Vanderpant, John (Dutch/Canadian, 1884–1939)**

After immigrating to Canada in 1911, Vanderpant became a major influence on photography in Western Canada in the 1920s and 1930s. His Robson Street gallery in Vancouver, opened in 1926 with Harold Mortimer-Lamb, promoted contemporary Canadian and international art and was a centre for music, poetry, and painting. Originally working in the Pictorialist style, in the late 1920s he developed a personal expression that emphasized light and form, becoming increasingly abstract. His solo exhibitions toured the United States, Great Britain, and Europe, and he became a fellow of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. (See Charles C. Hill, *John Vanderpant: Photographs* [1976].)

### **van Gogh, Vincent (Dutch, 1853–1890)**

Among the most recognizable and beloved of modernist painters, van Gogh is the creator of *Starry Night* and *Vase with Sunflowers*, both from 1889. He is a nearly mythological figure in Western culture, the archetypal “tortured artist” who achieves posthumous fame after a lifetime of struggle and neglect.

### **Varley, F.H. (Frederick Horsman) (British/Canadian, 1881–1969)**

A founding member of the Group of Seven, known for his contributions to Canadian portraiture as well as landscape painting. Originally from Sheffield, England, Varley moved to Toronto in 1912 at the encouragement of his friend Arthur Lismer. From 1926 to 1936 he taught at the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts, now known as Emily Carr University of Art + Design.

### **Varley, John (1912–1969)**

The oldest son of renowned Canadian painter Fredrick Horsman (F.H.) Varley, as an artist John Varley was interested in Rosicrucian, astrological, and oriental teachings.

### **Watson, Sydney H. (Canadian, 1911–1981)**

A commercial artist, painter, and educator, Watson was a member of the Canadian Group of Painters and an instructor and eventually head of the Ontario College of Art (now OCAD University), Toronto. His work is held by the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa; the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Kleinberg, Ontario; and Hart House at the University of Toronto.

### **Weston, W.P. (Canadian, 1879–1967)**

A significant figure in Canadian painting whose expressionistic and imaginative landscapes recall those of his better-known contemporaries the Group of Seven and Emily Carr. Weston was the first West Coast artist to be elected to the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. His work is held by major institutions around the country.



# SOURCES & RESOURCES

Very little was written about Jock Macdonald during his life, and the best essays from the past six decades are included in the catalogues produced for the last three major exhibitions of his work. The artist himself read widely in the areas of art, philosophy, and criticism. No films or documentaries have been produced about his work. His extant correspondence is preserved in the Pailthorpe Archive, National Library of Scotland, Glasgow; Correspondence with Artists – Macdonald, J.W.G., National Gallery of Canada fonds, and Jock Macdonald fonds, National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa; and Bates Papers and Nicoll Papers, McCord Museum Archive, Montreal. Joyce Zemans's papers, containing working notes, files,



copies of correspondence, and so on, will be located at York University in 2017.

## EXHIBITIONS

During his lifetime, Jock Macdonald was the subject of several important solo exhibitions.



Installation view of *Jock Macdonald* exhibition at Hart House Gallery, University of Toronto, 1957.

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### 1941

May 6-18, 1941, *J.W.G. Macdonald*, Vancouver Art Gallery. No catalogue. About forty works including landscapes and modalities were exhibited.

September 8-21, 1941, *J.W.G. Macdonald*, Vancouver Art Gallery. No catalogue. Twenty-two sketches of the Rocky Mountains were exhibited.

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### 1944

November 21-December 10, 1944, *J.W.G. Macdonald*, Vancouver Art Gallery. No catalogue. Primarily landscape sketches and paintings.

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### 1946

September 1-18, 1946, *J.W.G. Macdonald*, Vancouver Art Gallery. No catalogue. Exhibition of automatic watercolours.

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### 1947

August 1947, *J.W.G. Macdonald: Water Colours*, San Francisco Museum of Art. No catalogue. Thirty-six automatic watercolours were included in the exhibit.

October 1947, *Paintings by J.W.G. Macdonald*, Hart House Gallery, University of Toronto.



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- 1952** July 1952. *Jock Macdonald*, Victoria Art Centre. No catalogue. About thirty works—primarily watercolours—were exhibited.
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- 1957** November-December 1957, *Jock Macdonald*, Hart House Gallery, University of Toronto. No catalogue; there is a numbered checklist in Macdonald's handwriting. Twenty-nine works were exhibited.
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- 1958** April 21-May 3, 1958, *Jock Macdonald*, Park Gallery, Toronto. A pamphlet including a numbered checklist was published. Thirty-two works were exhibited.
- 
- 1959** March 9-April 15, 1959, *Jock Macdonald*, Toronto Arts & Letters Club. No catalogue; a numbered list of the works exhibited can be seen in Macdonald's notebook "Paintings on Exhibition: Loaned + Sold." Eighteen works were exhibited. November 1959, *Jock Macdonald*, Westdale Gallery, Hamilton. No catalogue; a list of works exhibited can be seen in Macdonald's notebook "Paintings on Exhibition: Loaned + Sold."
- 
- 1960** January 8-February 1, 1960, *Jock Macdonald*, Here and Now Gallery, Toronto. No catalogue; two numbered lists can be seen in Macdonald's notebook. Twenty-four works were exhibited.
- 
- 1962** January 5-20, 1962, *Jock Macdonald*, Roberts Gallery, Toronto. No catalogue for this posthumous exhibition.

#### RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

There have been four major exhibitions of Jock Macdonald's work in the last fifty years—in 1960, 1969-70, 1981-82, and 2014-15.

- 
- 1960** May, *Jock W.G. Macdonald, Retrospective Exhibition*, Art Gallery of Toronto. This comprehensive exhibition was mounted in the last year of Macdonald's life. Macdonald was involved in the selection of work for the exhibition and made sure it laid out his early evolution as an abstract artist, including his modalities. Sixty works were exhibited.
- 
- 1969-70** *Jock Macdonald, Retrospective Exhibition*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Curated by Dennis Reid and R. Ann Pollock. The exhibition was accompanied by an illustrated catalogue: R. Ann Pollock and Dennis Reid, *Jock Macdonald: Retrospective Exhibition* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1969). Circulated by the Extension Services of the National Gallery of Canada, 1969-70.



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**1981–82** April 4-May 17, 1981, *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape*, Art Gallery of Ontario. Curated by Joyce Zemans, with a comprehensive and well-illustrated catalogue: Joyce Zemans, *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981). The catalogue includes a reproduction of the handwritten text of Macdonald's major aesthetic statement, the 1940 speech "Art in Relation to Nature." (Travelled to Art Gallery of Windsor, June 20-August 16, 1981; Edmonton Art Gallery, September 19-November 8, 1981; Winnipeg Art Gallery, November 28, 1981-January 17, 1982; Vancouver Art Gallery, February-March 1982.)

---

**2014–15** October 18, 2014-January 4, 2015, *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, Vancouver Art Gallery, in conjunction with The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, January 31-May 24, 2015, and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, June 12-September 7, 2015. Curated by Ian M. Thom, Linda Jansma, and Michelle Jacques, with a comprehensive publication: *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, ed. Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, and Ian M. Thom, (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2015). The book includes not only critical analysis of the artist's work but also the text of Macdonald's recently discovered Nootka diary (1935-36) and an important body of correspondence between the artist and his mentors Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff.



LEFT: Pamphlet from *Jock Macdonald* exhibition at Park Gallery, Toronto, April 21–May 3, 1958. RIGHT: Tom Hodgson and Jock Macdonald at the opening of *Jock Macdonald*, Park Gallery, Toronto, 1958, photograph by The New Studio Photography.



### MACDONALD'S WRITINGS AND ILLUSTRATION

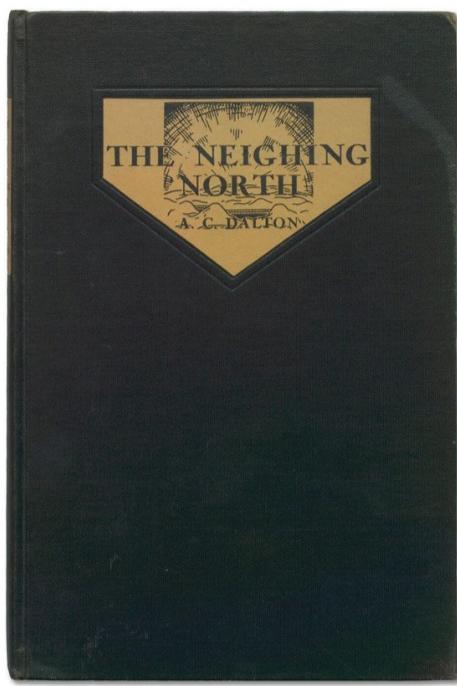
Although Macdonald taught throughout his life and often gave public lectures—particularly on the subject of modern art—there is little published material by him. He wrote short articles for *The Paint Box*, the magazine of the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts (now Emily Carr University of Art + Design), in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Dalton, Annie Charlotte. *The Neighing North*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1931. Illustrated by J.W.G. Macdonald.

Macdonald, James W.G.  
"Heralding a New Group."

*Canadian Art* 5 (1947): 35–36. Article introducing the Calgary Group, which he had been instrumental in founding.

—. "Observations on a Decade, 1938–1948: The Development of Painting in the West." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 25, no. 1 (January 1948): 20–22.



LEFT: Macdonald's cover illustration for *The Neighing North*, by Annie Charlotte Dalton, 1931. RIGHT: First page of *The Neighing North*, 1931.

### The Neighing North



#### Prologue

He knows not bit nor bridle, his nostrils are flaming,  
He calls—do you hear him—the Ghost of the North?  
With his hoofs he is pounding the reach and the tundra,  
With his wings he is shifting the Way of the Stars;  
He calls—do you hear him—the Neighing North?

There where no horse may live, he is calling the horsemen,  
He stands in tossed splendour and neighs at their world;  
In his eyes lurk the lightnings, from his teeth rolls the thunder,<sup>1</sup>  
And the wind of his Spirit like a whirlwind is blowing  
Invincible strength to the "chafferers and chatterers."

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix

[1]

### CRITICAL WRITING ABOUT JOCK MACDONALD'S WORK

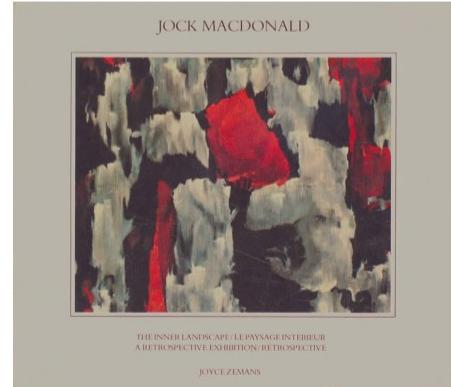
The best source for critical writing and analysis of Macdonald's work are the catalogue essays that have accompanied the three most recent major retrospective exhibitions of his work, listed above. There are, as well, several articles and books and a master's thesis that focus on various aspects of his work.

Bates, Maxwell. "Jock Macdonald, Painter-Explorer." *Canadian Art* (Summer 1957): 151–53. Maxwell Bates, Macdonald's artist-architect friend, wrote this article—the most important one written during the artist's life.

Colborne, Allison. "The Search for the Universal Truth in Nature." MA thesis, Concordia University, 1992. On deposit at the National Library of Canada, ISBN 9-315-80977-9.

Zemans, Joyce. "The Impact of Automatism on the Art of J.W.G. Macdonald." *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 7, nos. 1/2 (1980): 15–24.

—. "J.W.G. Macdonald: The Course of the Painter." *arts canada* nos. 242/43, (July/August 1981): 23–32.



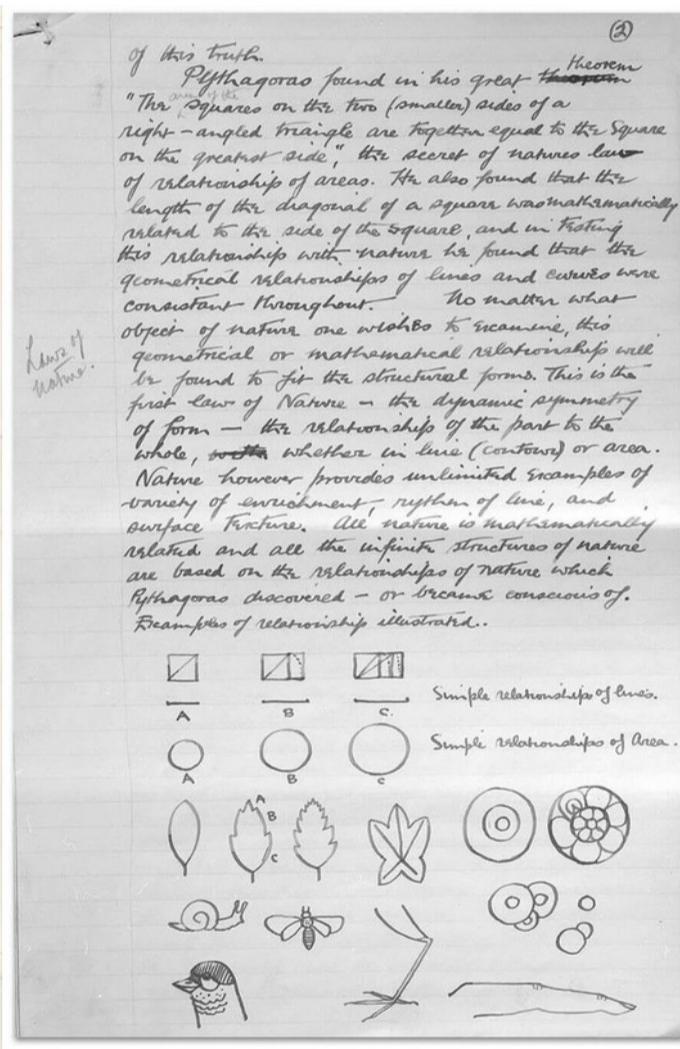
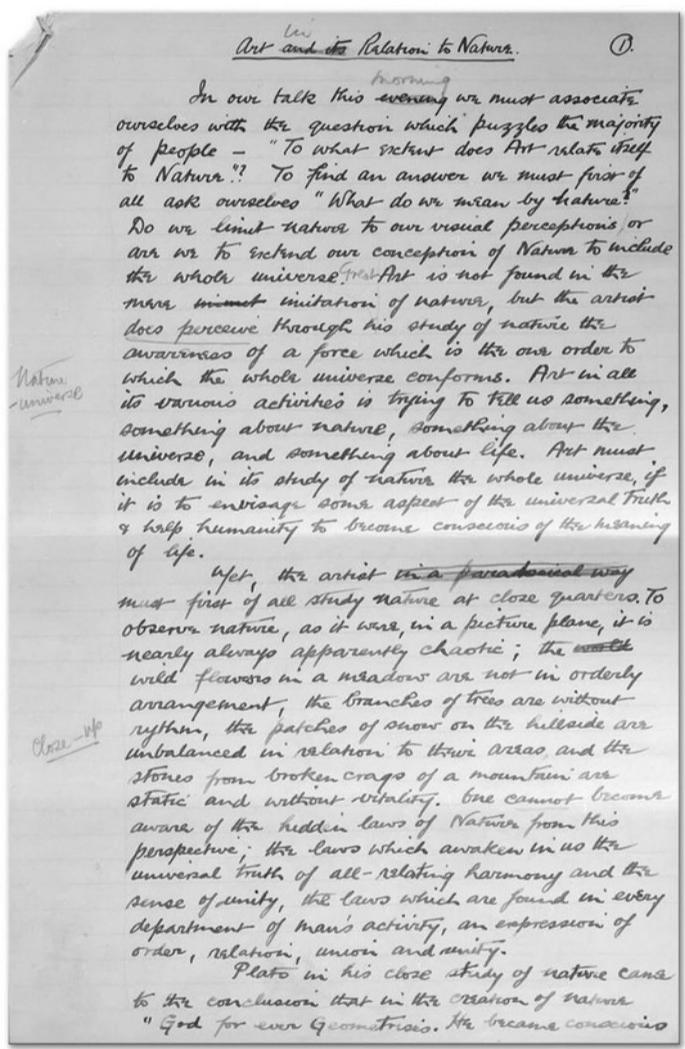
Cover of the exhibition catalogue for *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape*, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1981.

—. "Jock Macdonald: The Teacher." Ontario College of Art, Alumnus (Winter 81/82): 2-4.

—. *Jock Macdonald*. Canadian Artists Series, edited by Denis Reid. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1985.

### "ART IN RELATION TO NATURE"

In "Art in Relation to Nature," his 1940 speech at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Macdonald laid out his theories about abstract art, his investigation of spirituality in art, and his effort to integrate scientific and mathematical principles into a new artistic vision.<sup>1</sup>



LEFT: Two pages of the notes for a lecture, "Art in Relation to Nature," first delivered by Jock Macdonald in February 1940, collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer. RIGHT: Two pages of the notes for a lecture, "Art in Relation to Nature," first delivered by Jock Macdonald in February 1940, collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer.

He begins with the questions: "To what extent does art itself relate to Nature?" Do we limit nature to our visual perceptions or are we to extend our conception of Nature to include the whole Universe?" He answers with the belief that would remain fundamental to his artistic practice until his death. "Art is not found in the mere imitation of nature," but the artist must study nature in order to go beyond it and to be aware of the "hidden laws of Nature."

Macdonald cites Plato, Pythagoras, and Jay Hambidge in his examination of the geometrical structure of a work of art and its relation to nature. He continues with an examination of current scientific and philosophical theories of the structural forms of nature, including theories of space and time, and of higher dimensionality. He concludes with a citation from Thomas Mann's *Joseph in Egypt*: "We are children of our age, and it seems to me it always better to live by the time of the truth wherein we are born than to try to guide ourselves by the immemorial past ... and in so doing to deny our souls."

The handwritten notes for this lecture are in the collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer and are reproduced in *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape* by Joyce Zemans.

### FURTHER READING: ABOUT MACDONALD

Readers will find the following titles useful in understanding the context in which Macdonald worked:

Baldissera, Lisa. *Emily Carr: Life & Work*. Art Canada Institute, 2015.  
<https://www.aci-iac.ca/emily-carr>.

Boutillier, Alicia, Anna Hudson, Heather Home, and Linda Jansma. *A Vital Force: The Canadian Group of Painters*. Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre; Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 2013. Exhibition catalogue.

Davis, Ann. *The Logic of Ecstasy: Canadian Mystical Painting 1920-1940*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Davis, Ann, Elizabeth Herbert, Jennifer Salahub, and Christine Sowiak. *Marion Nicoll: Silence and Alchemy*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2013.

Hale, Barrie. "Introduction." *Toronto Painting: 1953-1965*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1972. Exhibition catalogue.

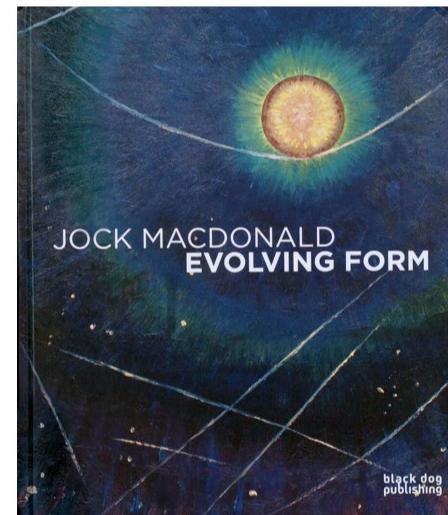
---. *Out of the Park: Modernist Painting in Toronto, 1950-1980*. vol. 2 of Provincial Essays, edited by Jennifer Oille Sinclair. Toronto: Phacops Publishing Society, 1985.

Hill, Charles C. *Canadian Painting in the Thirties*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1975.

---. *John Vanderpant Photographs*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1976.

---. *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada; Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995.

Leclerc, Denise. *The Crisis of Abstraction in Canada: The 1950s*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992.



Cover of the exhibition catalogue *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form*, Vancouver Art Gallery, 2015.

Murray, Joan. *Painters Eleven in Retrospect*. Oshawa: The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1979.

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Nasgaard, Roald. *Abstract Painting in Canada*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007.

Nowell, Iris. *Painters Eleven: The Wild Ones of Canadian Art*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010.

Reid, Dennis. *Toronto Painting: 1953–1965*. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1972.

Salloum, Sheryl. *Underlying Vibrations: The Photography and Life of John Vanderpant*. Victoria: Horsdal & Schubart, 1995.

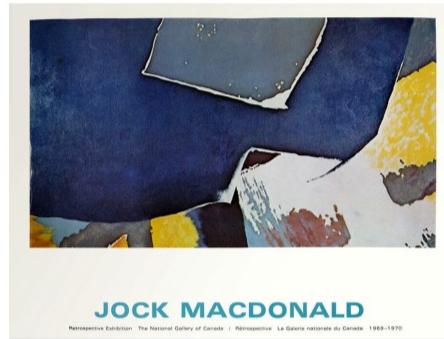
Snow, Kathleen M. *Maxwell Bates: Biography of an Artist*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1993.

Walker, Doreen, ed. *Dear Nan: Letters of Emily Carr, Nan Cheney and Humphrey Toms*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004.

Zemans, Joyce. "First Fruits: The World and Spirit Paintings." In *Bertram Brooker and Emergent Modernism*, vol. 7 of *Provincial Essays*, edited by Jennifer Oille Sinclair, 17–37. Toronto: Phacops Publishing Society, 1989.

—. "Varley: An Appreciation." In *Peter Varley, Fred Varley*, 51–75. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1996 (Originally published 1983).

—. "Making Painting Real: Abstract and Non-Objective Art in English Canada, c. 1915–1961." In *The Visual Arts in Canada*, edited by Anne Whitelaw, Brian Foss, and Sandra Paikowsky, 163–86. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2010.



Cover of the exhibition catalogue *Jock Macdonald: Retrospective Exhibition*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1969.

### FURTHER READING: SOURCES THAT MACDONALD READ

The following texts are some of the sources that Macdonald read and in which he found inspiration.

Besant, Annie, and Charles Leadbeater. *Thought Forms*. Adyar, Madras; Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1952.

Bragdon, Claude. *A Primer of Higher Space (The Fourth Dimension)*. Rochester: The Manas Press, 1913.

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Harris, Lawren. *Abstract Painting: A Disquisition*. Toronto: Rous and Mann, 1954.

Hofmann, Hans. *Search for the Real and Other Essays*. Edited by Sarah T. Weeks and Barlett H. Hayes Jr. Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1967.

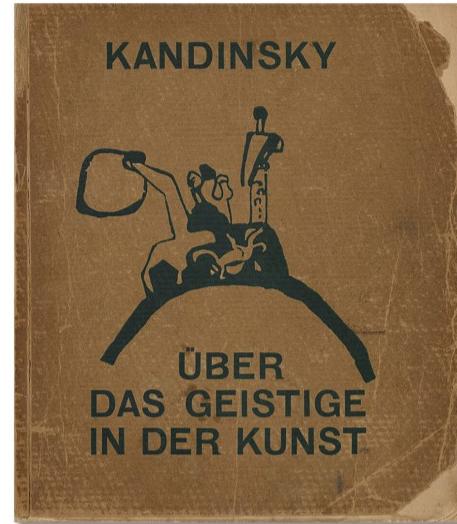
Kandinsky, Wassily. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, New York: George Wittenborn Schulz, 1947.

Jeans, Sir James. *The Mysterious Universe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948.

Ouspensky, P.D. *Tertium Organum: The Third Canon of Thought, A Key to the Enigmas of the World*. Translated by Nicholas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon, and with an introduction by Claude Bragdon. 1922. Reprinted, New York: Vintage Books, 1970.

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Ozenfant, Amédée. *Foundations of Modern Art*. Translated by John Rodker. New York: Dover, 1952.



Cover of Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art: Especially in Painting (Über das Geistige in der Kunst: Insbesondere in der Malerei)*, 1911 (dated 1912).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### JOYCE ZEMANS

Joyce Zemans is an art historian, curator, art critic, teacher, and administrator. The positions she has held range from director of the Canada Council (1988–92) to dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts (1985–88) and chair of the Department of Visual Arts (1975–81) at York University. She taught at the Ontario College of Art, 1966–75, where she also served as chair of the Department of Art History and founding chair of Liberal Arts Studies. She currently serves as director of the MBA Program in Arts and Media Administration at the Schulich School of Business, York University.

Zemans's research and writing has focused on twentieth-century Canadian art, curatorial practice, and cultural policy. In addition to her retrospective exhibition of Jock Macdonald (Art Gallery of Ontario), she has curated exhibitions on Bertram Brooker, Kathleen Munn, and Edna Taçon (all at Art Gallery of York University), Christopher Pratt (Vancouver Art Gallery), Alexandra Luke (The Robert McLaughlin Gallery), and Tony Urquhart (University of Waterloo Art Gallery). Her research has also focused on the impact of reproductions on shaping our understanding of Canadian art and Canadian identity; the formation of the art-historical canon; the status of women artists in Canada; the development of abstraction in Canadian art; and the role of museums in the twenty-first century.

Her publications on Jock Macdonald include *Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape* (the catalogue for the retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario, 1981); *Jock Macdonald* (National Gallery of Canada, Canadian Artists Series, 1985); "The Impact of Automatism on the Art of J.W.G. Macdonald," *RACAR: Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 7 nos. 1–2 (1980): 15–24; "J.W.G. Macdonald: The Course of the Painter," *arts canada* nos. 242–43 (July/August 1981): 23–32; and "Jock Macdonald: The Teacher," *Ontario College of Art, Alumnus* (Winter 81/82): 2–4.

Zemans has served on many arts and journal advisory boards. Currently she is a member of the advisory boards of the Toronto Arts Council, Theatre Museum Canada, the *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management*, and a consulting editor for the *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*. Zemans was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada in 2003. She is the recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (2002) and Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012) and the Canadian Conference of the Arts' Diplôme d'honneur (2010). She has received honorary doctorates from Concordia University, University of Waterloo, and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and is an honorary fellow of the Ontario College of Art and Design.



**"By the time I began teaching at the OCA in 1966, Jock Macdonald had become a legend. His former students were the artists and teachers of the new generation, and by guidance, inspiration, and example, he had sustained them in difficult times. In subsequent years of teaching and research in Canadian art, I came to realize that it was virtually impossible to discuss the history of Canadian art without reference to this brilliant artist and gifted teacher."**



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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

#### From the Author

I was fortunate that, in my early research, I was able to meet with Jock Macdonald's wife, Barbara, his daughter, Fiona, and his family in Scotland, as well as many of the artists who had been Jock's students and colleagues in Vancouver, Calgary, Banff, and Toronto. I also benefited from his copious letters to his friends.

In recent years, I have had the opportunity to meet another generation of the Macdonald family and I am indebted to Alasdair, Iain, and Alan Macdonald, who over the past few years, have graciously shared their memories of "Jock stories" with me.

The research of Ian Thom and Linda Jansma and the discoveries of Macdonald's Nootka diary and correspondence with Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff have all provided important new insights into Macdonald's understanding of his path to abstraction. The wonderful 2014 exhibition *Jock Macdonald: Evolving Form* and its publication, with contributions by Ian Thom, Linda Jansma, Michelle Jacques, and Anna Hudson, have allowed me once again to experience the arc of Macdonald's evolution through his paintings. Together, they have had a significant impact on this book for the Art Canada Institute.

There are many people who made this book a reality: image researcher Julia Lum, image research director Cliodna Cussen, design layout director Simone Wharton, and executive editor Kendra Ward formed the capable team whose support and encouragement assisted in the process of creating this book.

Writing for the ACI format was a challenging task, and I was extremely fortunate to have a talented and experienced editor. Working with Rosemary Shipton was a true pleasure, and I am indebted to her for her wise counsel and sound judgment.

I was thrilled when I learned that Delaney Capital would be the sponsor for the monograph on Jock Macdonald. Kiki Delaney's knowledge and leadership in the cultural sector is legendary. In my other life, I work in the field of cultural policy, and I understand, more than most, the importance of the commitment of those individuals, like Kiki, whose dedication has enriched the cultural life of our country.

And, finally, there is the remarkable Sara Angel! Her vision, passion, commitment, and tenacity are at the heart of ACI. Her knowledge of art history, combined with her experience in publishing and her powers of persuasion, have created a new model for writing and disseminating the history of Canadian art, making our art accessible nationally and internationally. We are all indebted to her.

**From the Art Canada Institute**

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Jock Macdonald, *Departing Day*, 1939. (See below for details.)

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Biography: Photograph of Jock Macdonald. (See below for details.)



Key Works: Jock Macdonald, *Fall (Modality 16)*, 1937. (See below for details.)



Significance & Critical Issues: Jock Macdonald, *Growing Serenity*, 1960. (See below for details.)



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



Style & Technique: Jock Macdonald, *Phoenix*, c. 1949. (See below for details.)



Sources & Resources: Jock Macdonald, *Fugitive Articulation*, 1959. (See below for details.)



Where to See: Installation view of *Jock Macdonald* at Hart House Gallery, University of Toronto, 1957. (See below for details.)

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### Credits for Works by Jock Macdonald



*Airy Journey*, 1957. Hart House Collection, University of Toronto. Purchased by the Hart House Art Committee, 1961/1962 (1962.02).



*All Things Prevail*, 1960. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1966 (no. 14898). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*B.C. Indian Village*, 1943. Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund (91.36). Photo credit: Tomas Svab, Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Batik*, 1951. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of Joyce and Fred Zemans, Toronto, 2008 (no. 42514). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



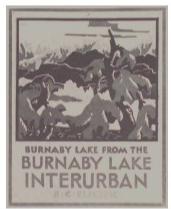
*Bird and Environment*, 1948. Private collection. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo credit: Cheryl O'Brien, courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Birth of Spring*, 1939. Private collection. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo credit: Jeff Duns, Ingram Gallery.



*Black Evolving Forms*, 1953. Private collection. Photo credit: Kayla Rocca.



*Burnaby Lake from the Burnaby Lake Interurban*, poster for the B.C. Electric Railway, c. 1929. Current location unknown. Courtesy of Joyce Zemans.



*Chrysanthemum*, 1938. McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, purchased 1993 (1993.26.2).



*Contemplation*, 1958. Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Friends of the Gallery (1964.149.001).



Cover of the British Columbia College of Arts Limited's *Illustrated Prospectus* for 1934-1935. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.

# A | JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



Cover of *The Neighing North*, by Annie Dalton Charlotte. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1931.



*Day Break (May Morning)*, c. 1937. Private collection. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo credit: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Departing Day*, 1936 (dated 1935) (verso of *Indian Church, Friendly Cove*). Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with assistance from Wintario, 1979 (79/60.2).



*Departing Day*, 1939. Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the Volunteer Committee, 1985 (85.21).



*Desert Rim*, 1957. Museum London, purchased with a Canada Council Matching Grant and Acquisitions Funds, 1960 (60.A.67).



Design for catalogue cover for the 34th Annual Exhibition of the British Columbia Society of Fine Arts, 1944. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Library and Archives.



Design for *Jock Macdonald* exhibition pamphlet, Park Gallery, April 21-May 3, 1958. Edward P. Taylor Library and Archives, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



*Drying Herring Roe*, 1938. Private collection. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo credit: Frank Tancredi.



*Etheric Form*, 1936 (dated 1934). Vancouver Art Gallery, gift from an anonymous donor (2012.52.4). Photo credit: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Fabric of Dreams*, 1952. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased by the Peter Larkin Foundation, 1962 (61/44).



*Fall (Modality 16)*, 1937. Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund (93.71). Photo credit: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Far Off Drums*, 1960. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1960 (no. 9061). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Fish Playground*, 1946. Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts (1973.013.002).



*Fleeting Breath*, 1959. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with the Canada Council Joint Purchase Award, 1959 (58/65).



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



*Flight*, 1939. Private collection. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo credit: John Taylor.



*Flower Study*, 1934. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of Joyce and Fred Zemans, Toronto, 2008 (no. 42513). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Formative Colour Activity*, 1934. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1966 (no. 14979). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Fugitive Articulation*, 1959. MacKenzie Art Gallery, University of Regina Collection (1961-2). Photo credit: Don Hall.



*Flood Tide*, 1957. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, purchased 1970 (1970MJ3).



*Friendly Cove, Nootka Sound, B.C.*, 1935. Current location unknown. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Photo credit: Robert Keziere.



*From a Riviera Window*, 1955. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased by Peter Larkin Foundation, 1962 (61/43).



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



*Graveyard of the Pacific*, 1935. Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund (89.14 a). Photo credit: Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Growing Serenity*, 1960. Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, (71.155). Photo credit: Cheryl O'Brien.



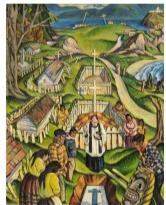
*Heroic Mould*, 1959. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, bequest of Charles S. Band, Toronto, 1970 (69/54).



*I Know a White Kingdom*, 1931. Illustration for *The Neighing North* by Annie Charlotte Dalton, Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1931.



*In the White Forest*, 1932. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased 1975 (75/38).



*Indian Burial, Nootka*, 1937. Vancouver Art Gallery, Founders' Fund (38.1). Photo credit: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.

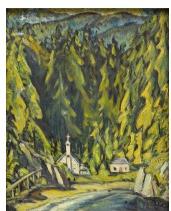


*Indian Burial at Nootka*, 1935. Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund (86.9). Photo credit: Trevor Mills.



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



*Indian Church, Friendly Cove (recto of Departing Day)*, 1935. Art Gallery of Ontario, purchased with assistance from Wintario, 1979 (79/60.1).



*Iridescent Monarch*, 1957. Art Gallery of Hamilton, gift of the Canada Council, 1960 (60.87.T).



*Legend of the Orient*, 1958. Private collection. Photo credit: Michael Cullen, TPG Digital Art Services, Toronto.



*Lytton Church, B.C.*, 1930. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1931 (no. 3953). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Memory of Music*, 1959. Vancouver Art Gallery, purchased with the assistance of a Movable Cultural Property grant accorded by the Minister of Canadian Heritage under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act (2005.1.2). Photo credit: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Nature Evolving*, 1960. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased by Peter Larkin Foundation, 1962 (61/41).



*Nootka Lighthouse, Nootka, B.C.*, 1936. Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund with the financial support of the Department of Canadian Heritage under the terms of the Cultural Property Export and Import Act (98.8). Photo credit: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.



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*Obelisk*, 1956. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1984 (no. 28503). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Ocean Legend*, 1957. Private collection.



*Orange Bird*, 1946. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, gift of M. Sharf, 1983 (1983MJ38).



*Pacific Ocean Experience*, c. 1935. Collection of Dr. Oona Eisenstadt. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Phoenix*, c. 1949. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, gift of Alexandra Luke, 1967 (1967MJ26).



*Pilgrimage*, 1937. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1976 (no. 18627). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Rain*, 1938. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2007 (no. 42049). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Russian Fantasy*, 1946. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased by Peter Larkin Foundation, 1962 (61/45).



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*Rust of Antiquity*, 1958. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, gift of Alexandra Luke, 1967 (1967MJ25).



*Scent of a Summer Garden*, 1952. Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Kingston, gift of Ayala and Samuel Zacks, 1962 (05-056) photo credit: Larry Ostrom.



*Slumber Deep*, 1957. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the McLean Foundation, 1958 (57/43).



*Spring Awakening*, c. 1938. Private collection. Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Photo credit: Ernest Mayer.



*The Argument*, 1952. Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, General Art Purchase Fund (1983.056.001).



*The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park*, 1934. British Columbia Archives, Royal British Columbia Museum Corporation, Victoria (PDP02138).

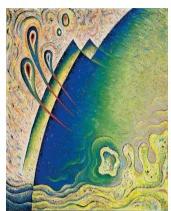


*The Black Tusk, Garibaldi Park, B.C.*, 1932. Vancouver Art Gallery, gift of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa (2004.24.1). Photo credit: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery.



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*The Wave*, 1939. Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, purchased by the Horsley and Annie Townsend Bequest (2002.112). Photo credit: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Christine Guest.



*Thunder Clouds Over Okanagan Lake*, 1944–45. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1969 (no. 15866). Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



*Twilight Forms*, 1955. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Miriam Fox Squires, Toronto, 1981 (80/197).



Trademark for the Canadian Handicraft Guild of B.C., date unknown. Collection unknown. Courtesy of Joyce Zemans.



*Untitled [10.20 p.m., September 16, 1945]*, 1945. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (GMA A62/2/3/02).



*Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 1]*, 1945. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (GMA A62/2/3/48).



*Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 2]*, 1945. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (GMA A62/2/3/49).



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*Untitled [October 26, 1945 - 3]*, 1945. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, (GMA A62/2/3/50).



*Untitled (Automatic)*, 1948. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, purchased with assistance from Wintario, 1977 (77/61).



*White Bark*, 1954. Collection of Glenbow Museum, Calgary (2005.041.001)



*Winter*, 1938. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Miss Jessie A.B. Staunton in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. V.C. Staunton, 1961 (60/18).



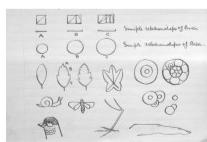
*Yale Valley, B.C.*, c. 1932. Courtesy of John A. Libby Fine Art.



*Young Summer*, 1959. Private collection. Photo credit: Kayla Rocca.

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### Credits for Photographs and Works by Other Artists



"Art In Relation to Nature," notes for a lecture first delivered by Macdonald in February 1940. Collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Photo credit: Robert Keziere.



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## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



*September 25, 1936, No. 1, 1936*, by Reuben Mednikoff. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (GMA 4203).



*Batik*, c. 1950, by Marion Nicoll. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, gift of Joyce and Fred Zemans, Toronto, 2008 (no. 42515). © Glenbow Museum, Calgary. Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada.



"Canadians Abroad," *Time* magazine, May 7, 1956.



Church and grounds at Friendly Cove (Yuquot). British Columbia Archives Collection, Royal BC Museum Corporation, Victoria (A-06087).



*Circus*, 1948, by Alexandra Luke. The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. R. S. McLaughlin, 1971 (1971LA190).



*Dharana*, c. 1932, by F.H. Varley. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift from the Albert H. Robson Memorial Subscription Fund, 1942 (2593). © Varley Art Gallery / City of Markham.



Dubuffet and friends in Vence, France, 1955. Photograph by Jock Macdonald.



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F.H. Varley, John Varley, and Jock Macdonald camping by Pacific Gas and Electric Company railroad tracks near Cheakamus Canyon, 1929. Photograph by Ross Lort. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.



First Conference of Canadian Artists at Queen's University, Kingston, 1941. Photograph by Hazen Edward Sise. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (PA-151359).



Graduation ceremony at the British Columbia College of Arts, c. 1934-35. Photograph by John Vanderpant. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.



Hans Hofmann and Jock Macdonald, Provincetown, c. 1949. Photograph by Barbara Macdonald.



*Heart of the Cabbage*, 1929-30, by John Vanderpant. Vancouver Art Gallery, Acquisition Fund (90.68.26).



Hotel Vancouver dining room, showing mural by Jock MacDonald, c. 1939. Photograph by Canadian National Railways. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (PA-198561).



Installation view of *Jock Macdonald* at Hart House Gallery, University of Toronto, 1957. Courtesy of Joyce Zemans.



# JOCK MACDONALD

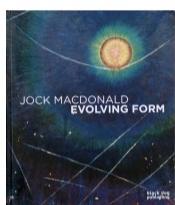
## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



Jock and Barbara Macdonald. Photographer unknown. Collection unknown. Courtesy of Joyce Zemans.



Jock Macdonald and others at the opening of the 20th Annual Exhibition of American Abstract Artists, with Painters Eleven of Canada, Riverside Museum, New York, 1956. Photograph by TDF, Toronto. Courtesy of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa.



Jock Macdonald: *Evolving Form*, edited by Michelle Jacques, Linda Jansma, Ian M. Thom. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014.



"Jock Macdonald: Painter-Explorer," by Maxwell Bates. *Canadian Art* volume 14, 4 (Summer 1957).



*Jock Macdonald, Retrospective Exhibition*, by R. Ann Pollock and Dennis R. Reid. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1969.



*Jock Macdonald: The Inner Landscape*, by Joyce Zemans, Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1981.



Jock Macdonald and Dr. Grace W. Pailthorpe, 22 Redington Road, London, August, 1949. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art Archive, Edinburgh (GMA A62/3/17).



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



Jock Macdonald and students at the Banff School of Fine Arts, 1951. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Joyce Zemans.



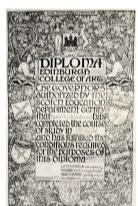
Jock Macdonald near Lytton on the Thompson River, B.C., c. 1932. Photo credit: Williams Bros. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.



Jock Macdonald, probably at Garibaldi, B.C., c. 1932. Photograph by Ron Vickers. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.



Lawren Harris, Jock Macdonald and A.Y. Jackson at Nan Cheney's house, North Shore, Vancouver, September 1944. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, Ottawa.



Macdonald's diploma from Edinburgh College of Art, 1922. Collection unknown. Courtesy of Joyce Zemans.



Mt. Lefroy, 1930, by Lawren Harris, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, purchased 1975 (1975.7). © Estate of Lawren S. Harris.



*On the Spiritual in Art: And Painting in Particular* (*Über das Geistige in der Kunst. Insbesondere in der Malerei*), by Wassily Kandinsky, 1911 (dated 1912). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Gift, Fritz Bultman, 1981 (81.2880) © 2016 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris.



# JOCK MACDONALD

## Life & Work by Joyce Zemans



Painters Eleven in 1957. Photograph by Peter Croydon. © 2011 Lynda M. Shearer. All rights reserved.



Photograph of Jock Macdonald. Collection unknown. Courtesy of Joyce Zemans.



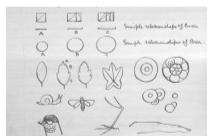
*Portrait of Jock Macdonald*, 1938, by Nan Cheney. British Columbia Archives, Royal British Columbia Museum Corporation, Victoria (PDF05729) © Estate of Nan Cheney.



*Portrait of John Vanderpant*, c. 1930, by F.H. Varley, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, purchased with funds from the Anne Eliza Winn Trust (2010.8.1). © Varley Art Gallery / City of Markham. Photo credit: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery.



*Self-portrait*, 1919, by F.H. Varley. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 1936 (no. 4272). © Varley Art Gallery / Town of Markham. Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



"Symbolism in Decoration," from a page in Jock Macdonald's notes, c. 1930. Collection of Marilyn Westlake Kuczer. Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Photo credit: Robert Kezire.



*The Road to St. Fidele*, 1929–30, by A.Y. Jackson. Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Art Gallery, Founders' Fund (32.5). © Carleton University Art Gallery, Ottawa. Photo credit: Rachel Topham, Vancouver Art Gallery.

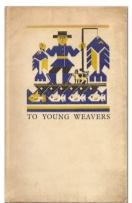


*The Spotted Ousel*, 1942, by Grace Pailthorpe, The Vera and Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and Surrealist Art in the Israel Museum (B98.0557) Photo credit: © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



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*To Young Weavers; being some practical dreams on the future of textiles*, by James Morton, illustration by Charles Paine. London: S. Phillips & co. Ltd., 1927.



Tom Hodgson (left) and Jock Macdonald at the opening of *Jock Macdonald*, Park Gallery, 1958. Photograph by The New Studio Photography. Courtesy of The Robert McLaughlin Gallery Archives, Oshawa, gift of the Feheley Family, 2013.



*Untitled (Automatic)*, 1960, by Marion Nicoll. Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, purchased in 1982 with funds from the Miss Bowman Endowment (82.7) © Glenbow Museum, Calgary.



*Varley, Täuber, Macdonald*, c. 1934, by Vera Weatherbie. Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, gift of Harold Mortimer Lamb (1997.036.001). © Estate of Vera Weatherbie.



*Young Pines in Light*, c. 1935, by Emily Carr. Collection of the Toronto District School Board, Acquired by the Prueter Collection (AGO.95534). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

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